

Some Important

TRUTHS

ABOUT

Conversion,

Delivered in sundry

SERMONS,

By INCREASE MATHER, Teacher
of a Church at *Boston* in *New-England*.

*Zech. 1. 5, 6. Your Fathers, Where are they?
and the Prophets, Do they live for ever?*

*But my Words, and my Statutes, which I com-
manded my servants the Prophets, did they not
take hold of your Fathers?*

*Joh. 13. 17. If ye know these things, happy are ye
if ye do them.*

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J. R. T. H. S.

Conventions

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To



To the Reader.

THe Subject-Matter of the ensuing Discourse is represented summarily in the foregoing Contents. And a little comparing of the Heads proposed to be handled, with the state of things amongst the generality of them who are called Christians in the World, will sufficiently evidence the seasonableness of managing such a Design, or publishing Discourses of this nature. Wherefore the things treated of being such, as at first view will extort an acknowledgment from all persons not under the power of avowed Atheism, that they are of the greatest Importance, the open Presumptions and Security of the minds of many under the present decays of Light and Truth, both in their Power and Dispensation, rendering their proposal and pressing on

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the Consciences of men, both seasonably and necessary; there is nothing further to be considered about them, but only how the Author of this Treatise hath acquitted and discharged himself in the management of his Design: This by an unexpected Providence in the Death of a worthy Person who furthered the Publication of it, is required of me, with an Importunity which I could not withstand, to deliver my thoughts unto. For although the Treatise be such in the whole, and all the parts of it, as needeth no Recommendation of mine, nor of others though of more weight and Authority than in any thing I pretend unto, nor perhaps will any thing that I can say contribute much unto its esteem with others; Yet out of that respect which I bear to the worthy Author, in that great distance from us wherein the Providence of God hath fixed his seat on in his Church and the World, I was not unwilling in a few words to declare my Judgment of his Labour in this matter, if so be it might prove a means to further the reception and usefulness of it in the World,

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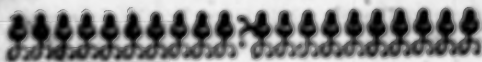
To the Reader.

The Apostolical Rule is, that in Doctrine the Ministers of the Word should shew Un-corruptness, Gravity, Sincerity, sound Speech that cannot be condemned. And I think I may say without offence, submitting my Judgment unto that of other Readers, that I have not seen many Treatises of this nature, wherein that Rule hath been more diligently attended unto. Whatever else the Author aimed at, it is evident that plainness, perspicuity, gravity in delivering the Truth, were continually in his eye, nor hath he come short of attaining his Design. And whereas it is known unto all, unto whom he is known, that he is a person of singular good Learning and Reading, he hath in this Discourse abandoned all Additional Ornaments whatever, betaking himself alone unto the Exercise of a sound Judgment and Spiritual Wisdom, in giving Evidence and Authority unto the Truth, over the Consciences of all who are concerned in these things. And as these are the principal, if not the only things, which in such an endeavour are to be

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be attended unto; so the particular Applications that are made herein of the Truths solidly before confirmed, unto the Consciences of Men and the Occasions of Life, are such as will discover the Author a Workman that needeth not to be ashamed. Wherefore the whole Discourse being, as to the Subject-matter of it, of the greatest importance, as to the Time of its publishing seasonable, from the present Circumstances and peculiar Temptations of the Age wherein we live; the Confirmation of the special Truths insisted on stable and solid; the manner of Teaching and Instruction observed throughout, being suited unto the condition and capacity of those who are most nearly concerned in it; I do steadfastly hope that it will, and shall earnestly pray that it may, every way answer the Design of the worthy Author in an effectual Tendency unto the Glory of God, and the Good of the Souls of Men.

John Owen.



*To the Second Church and Congregation at
Boston in New-England,*

Grace and Peace from God by Jesus Christ.

TH E holy Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, although they were sent forth, with a largeness and fulness of Power, (their Commission extending it self as far as every Creature, that is, every Man, (for the Hebrews were wont to call *Man* by that name of *Creature*) or men of all sorts, and in all places; the Lord having said to them, *Go ye into all the World and Preach the Gospel to every Creature: he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned*;) Nevertheless it is evident not only from those that write the Lives and Travels of the Apostles, but also from the sacred Scriptures, that they did by mutual Consent, divide the World among themselves, each taking a several part thereof, as his more special Charge. Hence is that *Rule, Line, Measure*, which we read of *2 Cor. 10. 14, 15, 16.* intimating that those that were invested with Apostolical Authority, yet had one this, and another that portion of the World, *measured out* as his more peculiar *Allot-*
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~~went~~ to Travel and Labour in. *John's* more peculiar Charge was in the lesser *Asia*; *Paul* taketh the Gentiles, and *Peter* the Jewish World before him, *Gal.* 2. 7, 8. 9. Accordingly we find them not only by Word, but also by *Epistle*, specially endeavouring the good of those amongst whom their appropriated charge lay. *John* doth by the Commandment of *Christ* write to the seven *Asiatick Churches*. *Paul* directs most of his *Epistles* to believing Gentiles. *Peter*, being Conversant in *Babylon* (which was *Birth Scaliger* *duar megis* *Asiana metropolis*) doth from thence write to the dispersed *Jews*, whose welfare (above others) he did seek to promote. And this last-mentioned *Apostle*, doth in his second *Epistle*, not only say, *I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and be established in the present truth, yea, I think it meet as long as I am in this Tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance*: But he doth moreover add, *I will endeavour, that after my decease you may be able to have these things always in remembrance*. For both which he gives the reason, *knowing that shortly I must put off this my Tabernacle*. This *Apostolical Practice* is (and should be) a sufficient inducement to Ordinary Ministers, faithfully to endeavour the good (indeed, as there shall be opportunity, of all men, but especially) of their peculiar Flocks, and Charges. This Consideration-

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tion then hath caused me first to preach and now to publish the *ensuing discourses* (such as they be) for your sakes. And this I do the rather, because (though I cannot say, with the Apostle *I know*, as not having had such a *revelation* as he there speaketh of, yet I can truly say, I have had many serious thoughts, and expectations of it, that I must and that very shortly too put off this my Tabernacle. For albeit I am through the Mercy of God in present health; and my dayes are not such, but that according to the ordinary Course of nature I might continue many years amongst you; yet some things there are, which cause me to expect otherwise. I must needs take notice of that which is the Observation of every one, viz. *That the Lord of late years is calling home his poor Ambassadors out of New-England apace both old and young.* And it is known unto you all, that God hath come very near unto me, by taking from me a Father and a Brother, both which were employed in the same Ministry, which he hath vouchsafed to put me (the least of all Saints) into; yea and since that hath laid his holy hand upon my person in bodily Infirmities, which brought me near unto death, even so near unto death, as that both you and I, *we despaired of Life.* But it having pleased the *prayer bearing God* who raiseth the dead, to remove that Sentence of death which I had in my self, and to restore me to
you

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you again, how shall I not by the providences mentioned be *awakened* my self (and endeavor to *awaken* others) to make haste to finish the work which upon the earth the Lord hath given me to do; and therefore by all means (wherein I may) labour to promote the *Salvation* of you, whose Everlasting weal (above others) I ought to seek after? If that may in any measure be the effect of this publication, my End is attained. Some of Christ's Words after his death were more effectual than in his life; so it often falls out with the Words of his poor Servants. Hence (saith that man of God sometimes famous amongst us) *I have desired to sow Seed; both by Pen and Tongue, both present and absent, alive and dead, not knowing whether shall prevail most, either this or that, or whether they both should be alike good.*

I cannot commend these *Sermons* to you from the manner wherewith the truth is managed, or from any thing of mine which doth attend them. I can indeed say that I have aimed at *brevity* and *perspicuity* (which seldom are seen together) yet as there is nothing that ever I did in my life, but I have cause to be ashamed of it, in respect of the many and great Infirmities adhering to what I have done; so in particular as to what is here presented to you. Yet (I say) though the management of those *discourses*, be exceeding weak, imperfect, and
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sinful, so far as there's any thing of mine therein; Nevertheless the Truths themselves which are here handled, are such as do *command* all your *Attention*. This Consideration also was it, that prevailed with me to publish what is now in your hands. When I considered, that the World hath too many Books in it already, and that *of making many Books there is no end*, some discouragement fell upon me; but withal remembering that there is not a superfluity of these Books, (of which the more the better, as one well speaketh, when Husbandmen complain of too much Corn, then let Christians complain of too many such Books) which being wholly *practical* and about things that do concern the *power of Godliness*, speak to the life of Religion, I was again animated to cast this *Misc* into the *Lord's Treasury*. For sure I am there are none amongst you, but these things are of high Concernment to you.

There are two (and but two) sorts of Men and Women amongst you. Some of you (and through grace many of you) are brought out of the miserable estate of Sin and Nature, truly to Close with Jesus Christ, and with God in him; to you I would commend what is here said, concerning *working out* your Salvation, and concerning these *renewed and second Conversions*, which even Christ's own Disciples may stand in need of.

Others

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Others of you (and to speak the truth plainly to you) by far the greatest part of you, (the more is my grief) amongst whom I have for thus many years been preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, are to this day in a natural *irregenerate estate*. Do you consider what is here said concerning *the absolute necessity of a true Conversion unto God in Christ, and the exceeding danger of living unprofitably under means of Grace, and that God's Spirit may soon give you over and then you are undone.* You let all of you consider and remember, that *Christ knocketh at your doors, and that precious time should be redeemed, and that strait is the Gate and narrow is the Way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

And as the sense of my own mortality drew me both to publish and preach these *Sermons*, so likewise the same thing causeth me at this time, and in this way to speak a few solemn words to you and to leave them upon Record amongst you.

The first word that I would say to you is this, *for that little time which I shall continue with you, let me have the help of your fervent and constant Prayers.* I believe you will all acknowledge, that my closing with your desires (which I withstood for divers years together) in *Comming*, under that dreadful bond of Office-Relation, was the return and answer of your Prayers,

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Prayers, yea of your Extraordinary Seekings unto God about that matter, and I doubt not but you will all say, that my being delivered from so great a death as that which above two years ago I was under the Sentence of, is also an Evidence that God hath heard your Prayers: Now then, the experience of the power which your Prayers have with God as it doth encourage me to desire them, so let it engage you to continue them. See then (for it is your duty so to do) that when-ever you fall upon your knees in your Closets to pray for your own Souls, that you bear me upon your hearts and make particular mention of my poor name before the Lord: what shall I say unto you? I might tell you that equity requireth this at your hands, for God is witness, and day and night seeth it, that I am mindful of you before the throne of grace, and that almost in every Prayer of mine. And I might say to you, that if you grant my request herein the benefit will be your own, *All things are yours*; my Gifts (such weak ones as they are) my Time, my Studies, all them are yours, who are my *dearly beloved, and your Salvation longed for*. If Christ fill me, I shall be the better able to give out to you. The more of the Gifts and Graces of the Spirit that a Minister doth receive from above, the better it is for them that wait upon his Ministry. Therefore deny

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deny me not if you respect your own Spiritual Welfare. But I will say moreover, that *I need your prayers* and therefore *let me have them*. You see and cannot but be sensible of the state of the Lord's poor *New-England People*. Our Prophets and our Fathers *where are they*? It is sad, but so it is, *New-England hath of late been a grave of God's Ambassadors*. Therefore those few that yet survive, need so much the more the help of the Prayers of God's praying people. *Pauls* are departed, pray then for *Timothies*; *Daniels* are gone to rest, pray then for *Haggais* & *Zacharies*, that do succeed; *Moses*'s are dead, pray then that the Lord would take of the Spirit which was in *Moses*, and put it upon the *Elders of Israel*; *Elijahs* are taken up; pray then that the Lord's Spirit may be doubled upon succeeding and surviving *Elijahs*, and in special upon him that now speaketh to you, who is the least among all the Lord's Servants, and not worthy to be called a Minister of Christ. All the Lord's Ministers need your Prayers, but none so much as he that is now writing to you, as being circumstanced with difficulties and temptations, which you little think of (but blessed be God that Christ seeth them) above others. I have heard concerning blessed *Burroughs*, that if any one came to visit him, after Expression of civil courtesies, he would soon say to them, *have you any business with me? if you have let me hear it,*

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it, if not, be not troubled at me but hold me excused, that I desire to retire to my study, for I have much work to do, and but a little time to do it in. Truly so it is with me, therefore I greatly need and earnestly desire, the continual Prayers of every Man and Woman amongst you that search God, or that knoweth what it is to pray. That great Apostle even blessed *Paul* not only in one but in all his *Epistles*, desireth the Prayers of Saints for himself. How much more do Ordinary Ministers stand in need thereof. And know for your Encouragement, that you may by your Prayers be a means to lengthen out the liberties, healths, lives of your Ministers, as the examples of *Paul* and *Peter* do make it manifest, *Philip* 1. 19. *Philem.* 22. *Acts* 12. 5. *Heb.* 13. 18, 19.

Secondly, See that you stand fast in the Faith and Order of the Gospel. Remember therefore what you have been taught; and hold fast the things which from Scripture you have received, and been instructed in, not only in these poor *Sermons* but in many other. You know that in former years, I have (according to the measure of Grace received) weakly discoursed and gone over, the first part of the body of Divinity, or the doctrine of Godliness; wherein you were instructed, concerning the Nature and Attributes of God, the Misery of man by the fall, and the Redemption of Christ, whose Person

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Natures, Office, Humiliation and Exaltation, have been largely *opened* and *applied* amongst you, of these things you have heard some hundreds of Sermons. And since my being restored to you (*as God hath enabled*) I have gone over that Platform or Rule of Prayer which Christ hath given to his Disciples, & those 8 *Characters* whereby the Lord hath described a truly *blessed* man; and the parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders; and the parable of the Sower, &c. I beseech you let not these things altogether dye with me. Nor think it much if I tell you, that if either you remain ignorant of the Truth, or hereafter depart from the Truths you have known, the words which have been spoken to you, will be a witness against you at the Last Day. But especially I speak this because I fear there is a Temptation coming upon *New-England*, wherein Men shall be tryed with false Teachers, whom God in his just and dreadful Providence, will send to punish the Contempt of his Gospel. In my publick Ministry I have sometimes said to you, that it is most certain that there is a dark time coming on *New-England*; dismal calamitous dayes are at hand. The Scripture which proveth it is that *Isa. 57. 1. The righteous person is gathered before the evil to come*: was it ever known in any age of the World, that God gathered many eminently righteous men at once (*as with us it hath*

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hath been) into his Heavenly barn, but a sad storm was at hand? And I am verily afraid that this which I am now mentioning, together with the miserable attendancies of such a Calamity, is (at least part of) *the evil that's a coming*. We know from the Scripture that the death or departure of the Lord's eminent Servants is wont to be a *pragmatick* of Corruption in Religion, *Deut.* 13. 29. *Acts* 9. 29, 30. Again, when the Lord's faithful Ministers have been undervalued and discouraged, God is wont to punish such a people with *false Teachers*. It is *Luther's* observation on *Gal.* 6. 6. that the reason why God afflicted the Churches in *Gallaria*, the Church of *Corinth*, &c. with false Apostles, was because they were guilty of neglect towards their faithful Teachers. When the Jews rejected the true *Messiah*, God punished them by sending false Christs amongst them; so when faithful and able Teachers are not so encouraged in the Lord's work, as it ought to be, the Lord by a judicial dispensation sends unto such a people, ignorant, or prophane, or seducing Spirits, that he so may take revenge for the Contempt of his Grace offered in the Gospel. Now if ever this were the sin of a professing people, it hath been the sin of *New-England*. Besides all this it is a sad Truth, that a Spirit of division is a forerunner of Apostasy and Corruption in Religion, as the Scripture plainly intimateth,

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1 Cor. 11. 18, 19. I hear saith the Apostle, *that there are divisions amongst you and I partly believe it*; Now mark his Reason, *For there must be also Heresies amongst you.* A Spirit of division is a Prognostick of a Spirit of Heresy, therefore, saith he, in as much as there must be Heresies, I am apt to think that the report about our divisions is true. Hence also another Apostle, when he is mentioning perservatives against the infection of error and Heresy, saith, *keep your selves in the Love of God*, Jude 21. because that divine grace of Love is a notable means to preserve us from the prevailing power of a Spirit of error and delusion; and breaches of the Royal Law of Love are usually punished with this forest Judgment. Now alas the world rings with our divisions. *Many are the breaches of the City of David*, which is one of the saddest Symptomes that can be, that this Calamity is approaching which you have been warned of. These things I have spoken to you more largely in my Publick Ministry; yet I thought it not amiss here again to mention them, that so they might not be forgotten. Paul said to his *Philippians*, *To write the same things* (which have been preached) *to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.* And I am perswaded that one Reason why the Church at *Ephesus* was so vigilant and zealous against false Teachers was, because Paul had before-hand told them, that they should be
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tryed with this Temptation, *Revel. 2. 2.* with *Alls* 20. 29. Now then being forewarned be forearmed also. And to that end let me add a third word which is this, *when the Lord hath removed from you your present Teachers, see that you carry it with respect to the Ministry of the word as ought to be.* Do not think it safe for your Souls to Live without Ministry and Ordinances, which Christ will have to be, and to continue in his Church even unto his Second Coming, *Matth. 28. 28.* *1 Cor. 11. 26.* *Eph. 4. 12, 13.* Nor may you think that every Christian is fit for this work, *for which who is sufficient? 2 Cor. 2. 16.* *An Interpreter* must be *one of a Thousand,* *Job. 33. 23.* Know therefore that *humane Learning* (as it's commonly termed) is very useful and needful for one that would approve himself an *able Minister of the New Testament.* How shall a man be able (*ἐλπίσιν*) *argumentatively* to convince the Subtile Adversaries of the truth without this, which yet is the necessary qualification of every Scripture-Bishop? *Ti. 1. 9.* How shall *Scriptures hard to be understood* be opened without this help? *2 Pet. 3. 16.* Indeed extraordinary Officers were not always fitted for their work by a precedent education, but as they were suddenly and extraordinarily called unto the Lord's work, so they were suddenly and miraculously gifted thereunto. But search the Scriptures and you will find that *Ordinary Teachers* in the

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Church, were ever fitted for that *great work of Teaching* the Lord's people by a learned Education. There were in the old-Testament Church, not onely Extraordinary but *ordinary Prophets*. Hence *Amos* saith, *Chap. 7. 14. I was no Prophet.* He was an Extraordinary Prophet, but therefore his meaning is, that he was no ordinary Prophet: whence he adds neither was I a Prophet's Son, meaning that he was not educated in the Schools of the Prophets, for those are frequently stiled *the Sons of the Prophets*, who were not there natural Sons, but their disciples or *Scholars*, being diligently instructed in the Law of God, that so they might be fit to Interpret the same to others. Hence were the appellations of *Nazarites, Scribes, Pharisees, Lawyers, &c.* All which names were at first honourable amongst the Lord's Antient People, till they did by degeneracy from their primitive Institution become odious; *Amos 2. 11. Eze. 7. 6. Mat. 13. 52. and 23. 34. Mal. 2. 8, 9.* And as for the New-Testament Church, the Teachers therein have all along been Learned Men. Albeit, as for the Apostles, Christ found most of them very unlearned, when he first called them, yet he would not suffer them to continue so, but would rather work a Miracle to make them *understand the tongues*, than that they should be unlearned still. Yea the truth is, that there never was any man eminently serviceable as a Teacher
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in the Church since the Apostles, except he were a Learned man. The Antients (Fathers as they were called) who defended the Truth against the Heathen Philosophers and the Hereticks of those times, (such as *Justin Martyr, Cyprian, Austin, Hierom, &c.* were Learned men: And had some of them had more Learning in the Original Languages, it had been better for them, and for the Church of God; for thereby many a misinterpretation of the Scripture would have been prevented. And as for the great Instruments of *Reformation* and opposers of *Antichristianism*, such as *Calvin, Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, &c.* they were all of them very Learned men; wherefore believe not those that would perswade you; that Schools of Learning, Colledges, &c. are Antichristianism, or late Popish Inventions. Doth not the Scripture, before ever Popery was thought of, inform us of Schools of Learning? Do we not read of the School of one *Tyrannus*, where *Paul* was once a *Disputant*, *Acts 19.9*? and doth not the Old Testament speak of *Masters and Scholars*, *Mal. 2.12. 2 Chron. 25. 8.* yea of Colledges, *2 King. 22. 14.* and in other places? The Jews also tell us of 3 famous Universities erected by their Fathers in *Babylon*, that so Religion might be preserved among them. Ecclesiastical story informs us that great care was taken by the Apostles and their Successors in the primitive times for the settling
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of Schools of Learning in all places, where Churches were planted, that so the truth might be propagated to Succeeding Generations, *Magd. Cent. 2. c. 7. and 3. Chap. 7.* And it is very worthy the taking notice of, that the Interest of Religion and good Learning, have risen and fallen together; the *fourth* and *fifth Centuries*, are called the *Learned ages*; and then did Religion Flourish more than afterwards: but when Popish darkness overspread the world, almost all good Learning was lost with Religion. But when the light of the Gospel did again break forth, about the same time did the Lord in his good Providence revive the knowledge of *Tongues and Arts*. Hence the enemies of true Religion have been enemies of Learning. Some have observed that *Jeroboam*, that so he might carry on his design of Corrupting Religion, did put down the Schools of Learning that were erected in the Land of *Israel*, which *Elijah* and *Elisha* did again restore. *Julian* the Apostate, that so he might root out the Christian Religion, destroyed all *Publick Schools of Learning* amongst Christians. Some of the Popes have been great enemies to *Academies* and good Literature. And so are the *Turks*, because the light thereof would be a means to discover and scatter the falsity of their dark Religion. It concerns Impostors to keep their shops dark, that so they may the more easily put off their deceitful wares. The

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Jesuits in their private *Instructions*, lately discovered and published, Chap. 16. have this for one, *we must teach that Learning is needless in a Parish Priest* (so they Jewishly term a Minister of the New-Testament) *and that if they understand the Gospel it is sufficient.* These subtle *Spirits of Devils*, as *John* calls them, know full well, that if they could bring it to pass, that there should be no Learned men to oppose them, the World would soon be theirs. But concerning this point you may satisfy your Consciences by reading discourses on this Argument, such as *Chauuncie's* Sermon on *Amos*. 2. 11. Mr. *Waterhouse's* Apology for humane Learning and especially Mr. *Keyners* godly and elaborate discourse concerning the necessity of humane Learning for a Gospel-preachers. And Mr. *Gale's* *Court of the Gentiles*, where it is proved that humane Literature hath received its Original from the Scriptures, and from the Jewish Church. I would not have said so much to you about this matter had there not been some special Cause for it. Let me further add, Look not upon gifts only in your Choice, but respect in a peculiar manner, that regenerating grace, whereby gifts are sanctified: It is needful that gravity, humility, and the fear of the Lord should be conspicuous in such, whose Relation ingageth them to be in word and in conversation, an Example not only to the World, but even of believers themselves.

And

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And when the Lord giveth you such as are Pastors after his own heart, feeding you with knowledge & understanding, see that you encourage them in the Lord's work, and grieve them not, for that will be unprofitable for you; you may quench the Lord's Spirit in them by grieving their Spirits. What a thousand pities is it, that when the Lord hath raised up men of rare parts and choice Spirits, filling them with Heavenly treasure, that they should have their hearts broken, and be brought to the grave with Sorrow? I speak not for my self, Brethren; For as for me, I deserve that nothing else but necessities, distresses, discouragements, reproaches, slanders, should be my portion, because *I am the chief of Sinners*; But I beseech you, let not others who are men of God and Servants of Jesus Christ, I say, let not *God's men* and *Christ's Servants* be so dealt with, lest their Master who hath said, *he that despiseth you despiseth me*, see it, and be displeased: Verily at whose hands soever the Lord bear with such things, in *New-England professors* he will not bear with it.

One Word more let me leave with you, It is this; *Remember you must give an account another day for all the means of grace which have any way been vouchsafed to you.* All the Sermons which have been preached to you, whether by others of the Lord's faithful Servants, or by me who am the weakest Creature and the greatest sinner,

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sinner, that ever spake to you in the name of the Lord, yet you must be accountable for them all at the Last and Great Day, yea and for *Books* also. There will a reckoning day come for Talents of all sorts. Now Good Books are pretious Talents. They are a fruit of the purchase of Christ's blood. And it is God doth raise up and gift his Servants, for writing as well as speaking; yea and by a secret work of his Spirit inclineth their hearts thereunto. Although this work, if done as it should be, requires *much study which is wearisome to the Flesh*; yet God maketh his Servants willing to undergo this trouble and labour for his peoples sake; And therefore he will surely call men to an accompt, about the Improvement of these Talents. You complain sometimes of your unprofitable hearing (and you do well to complain of it) But have you not Cause to complain, and mourn for your unprofitable *Reading*? One Dedicating a Book to another well saith, *That Books are a testimony likely to be produced in the day of Judgment against the persons to whom they are inscribed, in Case there be any defectum either in Judgment or manners from the Truths therein contained.* I shall add no more at present. Some other things concerning *Christ and Heaven*, I would fain leave with you. However that shall be, I am not altogether without hope, but that these poor Labours shall be blessed, for the Spirituall and Eternal

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nal good of some of God's chosen, both while I am here, and after I shal cease to be in this world.

I pray you Remember, That these truths were spoken to you, by one whom God brought out of his grace on purpose, that so he might declare these things to you. So I commend you to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance amongst all them which are sanctified. I rest,

*From my Study in
Boston in New-
England, the 13
day of the 4th
month. 1672.*

Your Loving (though
unworthy) Teacher

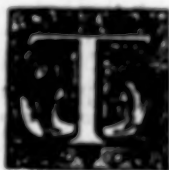
INCREASE MATHER.

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A sound and through Conuersi-
on, is of absolute necessity in
order to the Soules entrance into
the Kingdom of Heaven.

Matth. 18. 3.

*Verily, I say unto you, Except you be converted,
and become as little children, you shall not enter
into the Kingdom of Heaven.*



These words were spoken by
the Lord Jesus Christ: the
occasion of them we may see
in the first Verse of the Chap-
ter: viz. An ambitious En-
quiry amongst the Disciples,
Which of them should be the

greatest man, or have the greatest Dominion in
the heavenly Kingdom of Christ: The Lord
tells them in this Verse, that such Ambition was
not the way to Heaven; but on the contrary,
that if it did continue unmortified, it would
surely exclude them out of that Kingdom.

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In the words we may take notice of three things : 1. The main Truth which is here affirmed, *sc.* That Conversion is of absolute necessity, in order to obtaining the Kingdom of Heaven, *Except there be Conversion*, or (which explaineth the other) except there be *a becoming as little children*, even a *Regeneration*, and beginning the world *anew*, as it were, except there be this, there shall be no entering into the Kingdom of Heaven. 2. We have here the Persons unto whom this was spoken, *sc.* the Disciples of Christ ; *Except [you] my own Disciples be converted*, I say to [you] that [ye] shall not enter : Not but that they were converted already ; yet this may well be spoken, even to converted persons, thereby to convince them further of the necessity of that Conversion which they had already attained. Also, because though they were converted in respect of their *state*, yet they stood in need of a further Conversion, in respect of a *particular ill*, which they were too much under the present prevailing power of. And this sheweth, that all men whatsoever are concerned in the truth delivered : For if it be true concerning Disciples of Christ, that they must be *either Converted, or not saved*, certainly this is true, concerning *all other men*. 3. We have here the manner of the expression. This Truth is not barely affirmed, but with a *Verity* ; Christ doth not only say, but pronounceth it with a *Verity*,

Verily, saying, Verily, except you be converted, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; which noteth both the certainty and the solemnity of the thing expressed. This word [*Verily*] was frequently used by Christ, yet never but when there was some weighty and solemn Truth affirmed by him. The Doctrine therefore which we shall (by the Lords assistance) speak unto from the words, is,

That it is a most certain and weighty Truth, that a sinner, through Conversion, is of absolute necessity, in order to the Souls entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven.

In the Doctrinal prosecution of this point, we shall attend two things: First, we shall lay down some Propositions for clearing and opening the Truth about Conversion. Secondly, we shall demonstrate the Truth by Argument.

1. The Explication of the Truth, may be set before us in sundry Propositions.

Propos. I. *God is the principal Cause and Author of that Conversion which is here spoken of.* The words indeed may be rendred, *Except you convert;* but that sheweth rather mans duty, than his power to Convert himself; I say, God and not man is the principal Cause of this work. Hence converted persons are said to be *born of God, and not of man;* because not man, but

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God alone is the Author of Regeneration, *John 1.13.* therefore it was that *Ephraim* prayed, *TURN thou me, and I shall be turned,* *Jer. 31.18.* as if he had said, Except the Lord turn me, the work will never be done. And God doth this by his holy Spirit, therefore a converted person is said to be *born of the Spirit,* *John 3.6.* and, *born after the Spirit,* *Gal. 4.29.* And the Spirit of God is called, the *Spirit of Grace,* *Heb. 10.29.* because all Grace, and especially *Converting-Grace,* is from him: The truth is, that as Conversion is taken for the infusing of a *new Principle* of Saving-Grace into the Soul; so men are altogether *passive* in their *Conversion,* and the Eternal Spirit is the only principal Agent therein. Hence *Conversion* is called, a *new begetting,* *1 Pet. 1.3.* Now in begetting, the thing begotten is not active, but wholly passive: And it is called, a *Resurrection, or quickning of a dead person,* *Ephes. 2.1.* *John 5.24,25.* Hath a dead man power to raise himself out of his grave; or is it in the power of men or Creatures to quicken those that are dead? much more may we say thus as to dead Souls, that are buried in a grave of sin, guilt and misery: Yea, in *Converting* a Soul, there is a *Creating-power* put forth, *Col. 3.10.* which sheweth both that the Soul is passive in this work; and also, that it is above the power of men or Creatures to accomplish. Creation is a *Bringing* of something out of nothing: Now in

as much, as there is a kind of Infinite distance between Being and No-being; therefore an Infinite power is required, to produce a work of Creation. So is it in *Conversion*. Nay, that's harder than meer Creation: because in the first Creation there was no opposition: But now when God enters upon this work of the *new and second Creation*, there is what-ever resistance all the powers of Darkeness can make against him. Look, as it is an easier matter to make a new Glass, than to mend a broken one; so it is easier to create a new Soul, than by Conversion, as it were, to *make anew* the broken, ruined Souls of men.

Propoſ. II. *The Word of God is the instrumental means of Conversion.* James 1.18. *Of his own will begat he us, with the Word of truth.* God is (as was said) the principal Cause, but the *Word of truth* is the Instrument and *Mean* in the hand of the Spirit, whereby this mighty and astonishing work is brought to pass, *Psal. 19.7. The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul.* The Word of the *Law*, strictly taken, is partly Instrumental and Influential to the Souls *Conversion*. For thereby is *Conviction* of sin and misery, *Rom. 3.20. By the Law is the knowledge of sin.* If a man cometh to see and acknowledge himself to be a sinful and miserable Transgressor, this Conviction is by means of the Law. The *Ceremonial Law* was a plain conviction and evidence of the

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guilt of sin. Hence it is called, *the Hand-writing that is against us*. Col. 2. 14. because it was, as it were, a Bill of Indictment against the Observers of it: The Jews when they observed Circumcision, did thereby confess themselves guilty of Original sin, which is the sin of Nature; and when they offered any Sacrifice, they did thereby acknowledge, that they deserved to be dealt with, as they did unto that Creature which was sacrificed by them; yea, to be made an Eternal Sacrifice to Infinite Justice. And the *Moral Law* doth convince of sin. When that in the holy nature and exact purity of it, is brought home to the Soul, Conscience is convinced and awakened thereby, with the sense of Transgression and guilt. Hence the Apostle saith, *Rom. 7. 9. I was alive without the Law once*: He speaketh of what he was, when in his natural, unconverted estate; before the Law was effectually brought home to his heart, he was alive in his own conceit: *But when the Commandment came, I dyed*; when God set the Law, in the spiritual nature of it before him, then his Conscience was touched indeed, that he saw himself to be by nature, no better than a dead and damned creature: Now *Conviction* of sin is the way, and indeed the first step towards *Conversion*. But especially the Word of the Gospel is the great means of Conversion: Hence it is called, *The Ministration of the Spirit, and of life*, 2 Cor. 13. 6. because it

is the mean by which Spiritual life is conveyed to the Elect. The Law without the Gospel will never Convert: Hence men that have been strangers to the Gospel, have been unacquainted with the *Mystery of Conversion*, all their knowledge in the Law notwithstanding. The Gentiles, notwithstanding the Internal Law written in the heart; and the Jews, notwithstanding their knowledge of the External-Law, yet were strangers to true Conversion, because they knew not the Gospel in the power of it. The Law without the Gospel, will but drive to despair, and to set the sinner farther off from God, but will never bring him home to God again: It is also true, that God doth many times bless Providences, Afflictions especially, to help forward the Conversion of his Elect; but that is, by causing them thereby to mind and remember what the Word saith, *Affliction maketh a sinner to think of Christ*. But how came he to hear of a Christ, or to know that any help is to be had for his Soul? This knowledge is by the Gospel; so that still it remaineth true, that the Word is the principal Means of Conversion.

Propo^s. III. *In true Conversion, the Soul is turned from Satan, the World, Sin and Self.* In all changes, there is the *term from which* the change is: Now the Proposition is expressive of the *term from which* the change in Conversion is wrought. There are four particulars compre-

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hended under this; we shall briefly touch upon
each of them as we go along: 1. The *Convert-*
ed Soul is turned *from Satan*; therefore when
Paul was Instrumental towards the Conversion
of the Gentiles, he is said to turn them from *the*
power of Satan, Acts 26. 18. and when the Dis-
ciples were sent forth to preach the Gospel, and
thereby to Convert the World, *Satan* is said to
fall before them, Luke 10. 18. Conversion is the
same with effectual *Vocation*: Now in Vocation,
the term from which the Soul is called, is *Sa-*
tan's Kingdom, 1 Pet. 2. 9. *He hath called you out*
of darkness; namely, out of the dark Kingdom
of Satan. 2. From *the World*; therefore Christ
said to his Disciples after their Conversion, *You are*
not of the World, I have chosen you out of the
World, John 15. 19. Sin doth carry away the
Soul from God to the Creature; but now in
Conversion, it is taken off from the Creature
again; as we see in *David*, Psal. 119. 96. *I have*
seen an end of all perfection: His heart was taken
off from the Creature, so as he did not look for
his happiness there. The like we see in *Converted*
Paul, Gal. 6. 14. *I am crucified to the World, and the*
World unto me. The World was as a dead object
before his eyes, which is unlovely and undesira-
ble. 3. From *Sin*: Off in Scripture, Conver-
sion is called, *turning from sin*, Isa. 59. 20. Jer.
26. 3. and *a breaking off from sin*, Dan. 4. 27. and
a casting away transgression, Ezek. 18. 31. Isa. 31. 7.
yea,

yea, it is a turning from *all* sin, *Ezek.* 18. 11. 30, Herein especially Conversion doth consist, namely, in a true turning from sin; that is, *when the life and heart is thoroughly divorced from every false and evil way.* Men may confess sin, yet if they do not forsake it, this is no Conversion, *Psa.* 28. 13. They may forsake sin in their lives, yet if there be a love and liking unto any lust in the heart, there is no true Conversion. But of this more afterwards. 4. The Converted man is turned from *Self* also: This is the first, and indeed one of the hardest Lessons in Christianity, that a man must *deny himself*, *Matth.* 16. 24. A Natural man, maketh not only the World, but *Self* his God. He maketh *himself* his own *Last end*: He liveth to himself; but the Converted man doth not so. Herein is a main matter in Conversion, and that wherein the truth of the work is discerned, namely, when the sinner is indeed unbottomed from *Self*, especially from *righteous Self*: and Conversion doth imply a work of *Humiliation*, which is that whereby the Soul is taken off from resting in righteous *Self*: Some there are that attain unto a seeming, and as it were, an half-Conversion, but here they stick and perish; they do in part forsake the World and sin, but then they go to duties and righteousness of their own: But in true Conversion, the Soul is taken off from this bottom also. Hence *Paul*, after his Conversion, could

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could say, *not having my own righteousness.* Phil.
3.9. He did renounce all that was his own; not
only his *own* Sins, or his *own* Will, or his *own*
Relations, so far as they stood in opposition to
Christ, but his *own* Righteousness and all.

Propos. IV. *In true Conversion, the Soul is
turned to God in Christ.* In all changes there is
the term to which, as well as the term from which
the change is. Thus in Conversion, the for-
mer Proposition was expressive of the term from
which; this is expressive of the term to which the
sinner is changed; We have them both mention-
ed, *Acts 26. 19.* where the Conversion of the
Gentiles is called, not only a *turning from* Satan
and darkness, but *unto God*: Therefore it is said
of John Baptist, that he should *turn many of the
children of Israel unto the Lord their God*, Luke
1.16, because he was Instrumental towards their
Conversion: God went forth with John Baptists
Ministry to the Conversion of many Souls, there-
fore he is said, *to turn many to the Lord*: And
very often Conversion is called, *a turning to the
Lord*, Deut. 30. 10. Hos. 12. 6. Conversion is an
undoing of the work of sin; sin is a departure
from God: So Conversion is a going to him
again. Hence the Converting Prodigal said, he
would *go to his father*, Luke 15. 18. By these
two parts, or terms, is the whole nature of
Conversion described; see *Isa. 55. 7.* *Let the
wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man
his*

His thoughts : These words are expressive of the first part of Conversion ; *sc.* when the sinner is turned from evil, and that not only as to his way, or outward Conversation, but in his own thoughts, and inward disposition of heart ; it followeth, and *let him return to the Lord* — *To our God* : These words are expressive of the other and positive part of Conversion. Moreover, this turning must be to God in *Christ* ; for true Conversion is an *Evangelical* work ; Though a man should repent with Legal Repentance, and turn to God in a Legal way, this is *no Conversion*, if *Christ be not turned unto, and God, even the Father in him*. The Jews did thus return, yet they *Converted not*, because they sought God *out of Christ*, Rom. 9. 32. Hence *Conversion* is called, a *seeking of Christ*, Hosea 3. 5. and *Converted Ones* are described to be such as are *in Christ*, Rom. 16. 7. *Paul* there saith, that his Kinsmen *Andronicus and Junias were in Christ* before him, meaning, that they were *Converted* before him ; and to have *put on Christ*, Gal. 3. 27. Although there are many that call themselves Christians, that know not what Conversion means, yet a *true Convert*, and a *true Christian*, are the same : Conversion doth imply *faith in Christ*. It hath been a great Question amongst some, *Whether Faith or Repentance be first wrought* ; and a great deal of disputing there hath been about this point, which might have been spared. The true
and

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and plain Answer is, That as Repentance is taken for the first part of Conversion, so it is in order of Nature before Faith, though in Time with it: *The term from which*, is in order of Nature, before *the term to which*; but as Repentance is taken for the whole work of Conversion (as oft in Scripture it is) so it implieth Faith in Christ. You heard but now, that *Conversion* and *Vocation* are the same: Now in Vocation, *the term to which* the Soul is called, is *the Kingdom of Christ*, Col. 1. 13. This Text doth intimate, that Converted ones are brought into the *Kingdom of Heaven*; and it must needs be so, because in Conversion, *the term to which* the Soul is brought, is *the Kingdom of Christ*; now that is meant by *the Kingdom of Heaven*, even the *heavenly Kingdom of the Messiah*: Christ's Kingdom, and the Kingdom of Heaven, are the same.

Propof. V. *True Believers on Christ may undergo a farther, and, as it were, a second Conversion.* This is plainly (and indeed a main thing intended therein) intimated in the Text: Christ here tells his *own Disciples*, that *except they were converted*; i. e. except there were a farther, and as it were, a new Conversion wrought in *them*, and upon *them*, they should not see Heaven. There is an *universal* Conversion, and a *particular* Conversion: One in the state of Nature, needs the former; a true Christian may stand in need of this latter. This may be secretly hinted

at by that expreffion, *Jer. 4. 3. Plough up the fallow ground of your hearts.* Fallow ground you know, is fuch as hath been once broken up already; but by reason of its being overgrown with weeds and thorns, &c. may need a further and new breaking up. So it is here, they that have had their hearts truly broken up for fin, may become *fallow ground*, fo as to need that new furrows fhould be made in their Souls: They may be fo overgrown with the weeds of fin, as that the Plough-share of Repentance muft again break up their hearts. Conversion is fometimes taken for a *ſpiritual habit* infuſed into the Soul, fo it is not to be *reiterated*; for the habit of Grace wrought in the firſt Conversion, is never loſt. Sometimes it is taken for *an aſſ* proceeding from that habit: Thus a man may be converted over and over again, yea, thus a Chriſtian is converting all his life long; that is to ſay, he is ſtill getting farther off from fin and the World, and nearer unto God in Chriſt; the life of a Chriſtian is and ought to be a life of Faith and Repentance. Hence even true Believers yet are called upon to repent: So we find in thoſe Epiſtles which the Lord Jeſus ſent from Heaven to the Churches, they are commanded to repent, that is, to *renew their Repentance*. And this Truth is evident, in that a true child of God may be too far ſubject to the prevailing power of ſome ſpecial corruption, in
which

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which case, a new or farther Conversion is requisite. This was the case of the Text; the *Disciples* were under the present predominancy of an ambitious Lust, in a great measure, therefore the Lord tells them, *they must be converted.* The like we find, in respect of another corruption, in that good Prophet *Jeremiab*, see *chap. 15. vers. 19.* *Thus saith the Lord, if thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me:* You may see in the former Verse, that the good man was surprized with a pang of Unbelief; and while the temptation and corruption prevailed upon him, he manifests much impatency and murmurings of spirit: Now saith God to him, if thou wilt return from this evil frame of spirit, if thou wilt convert thee from these evils, then will I again make use of thee in my service, &c. So that a very good man may be distempered with particular Corruptions, so as to need a returning and converting from them to the Lord again. Yea, it is a sad truth, That a godly man may possibly be under the present power of some Corruption, in such a degree, as that it is impossible for him to get to Heaven until that Corruption be further mortified. This is plainly affirmed by the Text, Christ declareth to his Disciples, that except that Lust of Pride were further mortified in them, they should not enter into Heaven. Some sins which true Believers are guilty of, they must and shall repent
of

of them before they go out of this World, that so they may be fit for Heaven.

Again, Grace may be exceeding weak in a true Believer, and in that case a further Conversion is necessary: Ordinarily it is thus with *new Converts*; in such, many times Grace is very weak, and Corruption is very strong; there is little Knowledge, and much Ignorance; little Humility, and much Pride; and thence a further Conversion must be. This we see in the Disciples themselves, a long time they were marvelously Ignorant, and yet too full of Pride and other Corruptions: But after the Ascension of Christ, there was a mighty change wrought in them; *Then was that accomplished upon them, which here Christ said must be, a new Conversion,* they were *endued with power from on high*, Luke 24. 49. The Lord from on high poured his Spirit mightily upon them, and thereby were they wonderfully changed: The change which was then wrought upon the Disciples, was not much less, than that which was wrought on them at their first Conversion; they differed from what themselves were afore, well nigh as much as at their first Conversion they were made to differ from other men.

Again, True Believers may be under sad Spiritual decays, and in this respect they may need, as it were, a *new Conversion*. This we see in the collapsed Churches of *Asia*; yea, a godly man may

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may fall into gross sins, such as waste and wound the Conscience, and break Communion with God ; indeed into any sin, though never so vile, except only that sin against the Holy Ghost, and final Impenitency. Now in this case a new Conversion is necessary ; we see instances hereof in *David*, Psal. 51. 10. after his fearful fall and miscarriage in that matter about *Uriah* (for that, as the Title sheweth, was the occasion of his penning that Psalm) he prayeth, that God would create a clean heart, and renew a right spirit in him : He speaketh as if all the work of Conversion were to begin anew again. And in *Solomon* : His penitent Soul wrote a Book of Repentance ; *Ecclesiastes* is the Book of *Solomons* Repentance, not of his first, but of his second Repentance. And another instance hereof we have in *Peter* : Hence Christ said to him, *Luke* 12. 32. *When thou art Converted, &c.* *Peter* was Converted before that time, but Satan so far prevailed upon him, as that by the sudden surprisal of a Temptation, he became guilty of Lying and Perjury, and (which was worst of all) denied Christ too : Now in regard of this fearful fall into sin, he stood in need of being, as it were, *Converted anew* ; therefore Christ said to him, *When thou art converted*, meaning, when he should have repented of his grievous Transgression. Besides all this, the truth of what you hear is evident, if we consider the several steps of Conversion ; e.g. A

true Believer may undergo a new work of *Conviction and Illumination*; God may teach him that which he hath not yet seen, *Jab* 34.32. he may have further Visions of God, and Visions of his own Heart too, yea such discoveries, as may differ in degree, as much from the enlightnings received, when first Illuminated, as the knowledge of a man differs from the knowledge of a child, *1 Cor.* 13.11. and he may undergo a new work of *Compunction or Contrition* for sin. Hence *David* after his fall complains of *broken bones*, *Psal.* 51.8. because his sin occasioned and caused as much grief to him, as if all his bones had been shivered in pieces. And *Solomon* found his vanity in the end of it, *more bitter than death*, *Eccles.* 7.26. And *Peter*, when his Conscience was touched with a saving remorse for his sin, *went out and wept bitterly*, *Matth.* 27. ult. So for *Humiliation*, a true Believer may undergo that work anew: We see it in *Jab*, after the sinful distempers of his spirit had broke loose, he cryeth out against himself, *I am vile*, chap. 40. vers. 4. And inasmuch as his Repentance and Humiliation was not altogether so deep and thorough as should have been, the Lord speaketh more awakingly to him, until he cry out a second time, *I abhor my self, and repent in dust and ashes*, chap. 42.6. And the like we read concerning *H Ezekiah*, *2 Chron.* 31.26. *He humbled himself, for the pride of his heart*; not but that he had hum-

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bled himself for that and other sins many a time, and many a day afore that time, but then he renewed his *Humiliation* before the Lord. And a further work of *Conversion* may be wrought upon the Believer, in respect of *Separation from sin, and Amendment of life*. Thus also with *David*, *Psal. 119. 67. Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word*: Not but that he made Conscience of his ways from his youth up, but that affliction was a means to make him more circumspect and exact in his walking before God. So the *Corinthians*, after that humbling Providence about the Incestuous Person, were much reformed, *2 Cor. 7. 11*. Also in respect of closing with Christ, a true Believer may fall, as it were, under a *second Conversion*: We therefore read, *that the Disciples believed*, *John 2. 11*. the Disciples believed before, otherwise they had not been called Disciples, but now they renewed their closing with Christ. So that the Holy Spirit doth sometimes go over the work of *Conversion* in all the steps of it, in the hearts of his children, and that again and again; yea, and sometimes he doth all this in a very eminent manner.

Propos. VI. In true Conversion, there is a change, even of the whole man. The sanctifying change wrought in *Conversion*, must be proportionable to the defilement of natural Corruption. Now that's total; what the Prophet speaketh, concerning that

that woful defection and corruption of the Jewish state, *Isa. 1. 6.* From the sole of the foot, even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores, may truly and fitly be applied unto the corrupted estate of all men by nature. This Corruption of Nature was Typified under the Law by the spreading Leprosie (*Lev. 13. 12, 13.*) which covered all the skin of him that had the Plague, from his head, even to his foot. Now the Plaister must be answerable to the Sore; therefore inasmuch as the Corruption of Nature is universal, as to all parts and faculties; so must Repentance and Conversion be universal. Hence a true Convert is said to be a new, and another Creature, *2 Cor. 5. 17.* *If any man be in Christ, he is a new Creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.* In Conversion, Heaven and Earth is new; that is to say, all is new from the top to the bottom; it's such another change as that, which shall pass upon the World at the last and Great Day: Indeed, then the materials shall be the same, but there will be a wonderful alteration as to qualities; so it is when a Soul is Converted. As if a man should deface a deformed Picture, and in the room of it should draw another compleat and beautiful; here the subject matter is the same, only here's a new Image. Thus the Holy Spirit draweth the blessed Lines of the Image of God on that Soul, where once was the

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deformed Image of Satan. But to evince the truth of this Proposition, by Induction of particulars: 1. In Conversion, *the head is made new.* A true Convert hath a *renewed mind*, Eph. 4. 23. Hence Conversion is in the Scripture called, *Illumination*, Heb. 10. 32. and, *opening of the eyes* of the Soul, *Acts* 26. 18. *Ephes.* 1. 18. Whenever God converts a Soul, he lets in a new, and a blessed light into the Understanding, that the sinner hath other apprehensions about God, and Christ, and Heaven, and Sin, and Hell, and Spiritual objects, than once he had. Every Converted sinner may say, as the man that was born blind said, after Jesus Christ had healed him, *John* 9. 25. *One thing I know, that whereas I was born blind, now I see.* Some that are truly Converted, cannot tell exactly the time, or the means, or manner of their Conversion; yet this they know, that now they see Spiritual things with another kind of sight and apprehension, than once they did. The truth is, that Conversion doth begin here: As in the *first Creation* God began with *light*, so in this second and new Creation, the Lord begins with effectual Conviction and Illumination. 2. In Conversion, *the heart is made new*, *Ezek.* 36. 26. *A new heart will I give.* Converting Grace is promised to the Elect under that expression. *A new heart* is given to a man, when that heart which once was hard and senseless, is become soft and tender

tender; when an heart of stone, is turned into an heart of flesh; and when that heart which once was full of nothing but pride and vanity, is become humble and meek. And when that heart which was foolish is become Spiritually wise, *Prov. 10. 8.* The Heart is oft in Scripture, put for the Will; because it is the seat and subject thereof, as the Head is of the Understanding. Now in Conversion, the Will is wonderfully changed, *Psal. 110. 3.* *A willing people in the day of thy power;* when the day of Gods power doth pass upon the Soul in Converting Grace, the Will is captivated. The Will then refuseth old sinful Objects which once were delighted in; and instead thereof, chuseth new and better Objects: That Will which before was obstinate and rebellious, is now become pliable to the will of God in every thing. You see it in *Paul*, when he was in the Pangs of the new birth, *Lord*, saith he, *what wilt thou have me to do?* *Acts 9. 6.* And this alone proveth the truth of the Proposition before us; for a change of the Heart or Will, infers a change of the whole man; the Reason is, because the Will is the Empress and Commandress of the Soul. Hence the act of any faculty or part belonging to a man, is not to be accounted the act of the whole, except the Will be involved in it. 3. In Conversion, *the affections are renewed:* A sincere Convert doth not affect those evils, which once

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he did affect; and doth affect those good things which once he did not affect: Converting Grace causeth a marvellous change upon the affections; e.g. If we speak of Love and Hatred, when a sinner is Converted, these affections are much altered and placed upon new and other Objects: He loveth Spiritual good things in the chief place; he loveth God and Christ above all, *Psal.* 33. 25. *Luke* 14. 26. he loveth Truth, Ordinances, Saints, Holiness, as such, which the Natural man doth not; he hateth sin, and that universally, *Psal.* 119. 128. *Prov.* 8. 13. he hath an heart after Gods own heart, *Acts* 13. 22. that is to say, he doth love the things which God doth love and hates the things which God doth hate. Again, the sincere Convert hath new joys and sorrows in his Soul. As for the Natural man, his chief joy and delight is in some carnal, worldly Object, either in the Pleasures, or Profits, or Honours which the World affords: But as for the Converted man, his chief delight is in Spiritual Objects; as in the favour of God, and communion with him by Jesus Christ, and in the precious Promises, &c. yea, he finds more sweetness in one good look from God in Christ, or in one Promise, than in all that the whole Earth can afford, *Psal.* 4. 6. & 94. 19. So for Sorrow; the greatest sorrows of a Natural man, are upon the account of some worldly cross or disappointment; but the Converted man is
grieved

grieved most of all with the loss of Gods favour, *Psal.* 30. 6. and with the dishonour done to Gods name in the World, *Psal.* 119. 136, 158. as to intellectual and rational sorrow, Sin is the matter of greatest grief unto his Soul, especially those sins which before Conversion, were the most delightful, after Conversion are the greatest bitterness of Soul. Again, where there is true *Conversion*, there are new hopes and fears; his hopes are placed chiefly upon Eternal Objects, upon Christ, and Heaven, and Eternal Life, *Col.* 1. 5, 27. and the like may be said concerning his Fear, it is not placed so much upon Temporal, as upon Spiritual and Eternal Objects. I do but touch at things as we go along; but by this you see, that *Converting Grace* makes a wonderful change upon the affections; yea, upon all the affections, whether they be affections of *Union*, or affections of *Aversion*. 4. In Conversion, there are *new thoughts* put into the heart; and if there be a real and through change, in respect of the thoughts, it is a special Evidence of true Conversion, *Isa.* 55. 7. An Unconverted sinner, or one that hath only a common work of Gods Spirit upon him, may possibly make some Conscience of his words and outward actions; but it's rare for such an one to look narrowly and diligently to the inward thoughts and workings of his heart; but where the Gospel prevaileth to a sound Conversion of the Soul, it brings every

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thoughts into subjection to the will of God, 2 Cor. 10. 5. The sincere Convert will not allow himself so much as in vain and unprofitable thoughts, Psal. 119. 113. *vain thoughts do I hate*; much less in proud thoughts, or unclean thoughts, or revengeful thoughts. 5. In Conversion, there is a great change wrought, in *refress of words*: It is therefore sometimes expressed in the Scripture, by the *Circumcision of the Lips*. And by that phrase, of *a pure Language*, 2 Cor. 3. 9. The same man that before his *Conversion*, was, it may be, a Reviler of good men, a Scoffer of Godliness, a prophane Swearer, or a filthy speaker; after his Conversion, you shall hear no more such evil Communication from him; but instead thereof, he will be speaking about Christ, and Heaven, and the estate of his own Immortal Soul, and be full of gracious, edifying discourse; such a mighty change doth Converting Grace work, when it cometh in power. And certain it is, that except a mans Lips and Language be sanctified, he is a stranger to Conversion, and to the power of Religion or Christianity; James 1. 26. *If any man seem to be Religious, and bridleth not his tongue, he deceiveth his own heart, his Religion is vain*. Men may call themselves Christians, and yet have *unbridled tongues*; and they may think to be saved, because of their Profession of Christianity; but alas, they deceive themselves, and all their pretences to Religion

ligion will prove a vain thing, if they have not a pure Language. 6. Where there is Conversion, there is a new life and Conversation, Ephes. 4. 22. Rom. 6. 4. He that is Converted, doth, as it were, turn over a new leaf, and leads a new life, quite differing from what he formerly lived. And this is that which is especially signified by the word [*Conversion* :] The word is a Metaphor taken from a man, that is walking in a wrong way; but if ever he would come to his journey's end, he must turn quite about, and go in a contrary way to that, which at present he walketh in. Men by Sin turn out of the right way; sinners are *perverters of their way*, but by Repentance and Conversion they return, and are brought back into the right way again, Jer. 3. 21, 22. The true Convert walketh in new ways, and taketh new courses: He did walk in the way of sin, he doth walk in the way which is called holy; he did walk in the broad way, he doth walk in the narrow way. 7. Where there is Conversion, there will also be a change in respect of company: As a new Conversation, so a new Company to converse withal, Prov. 13. 20. We see a sudden and marvellous change, in this respect, wrought in Paul at his first Conversion, Acts 9. 26. before his Conversion, he delighted in the Company of none but carnal Jews, but after his Conversion, none so welcome to him as Godly Christians: Those very persons that

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that before he did malign, hate to the death, afterwards he ventured his life for their sakes. And indeed there is nothing that doth make a greater discovery of a mans spirit, than the company which he doth frequent and delight in. A prophane spirited man, loveth prophane Company, one that is not prophane, and yet unconverted, only civil and outwardly blameless in his Conversation, delights not in prophane Company, nor yet in godly Society, only in such as are in the same state and form with himself: But gracious Souls delight in such as truly fear God; yea, the more there is of God in any one, the more doth the true Convert delight in Communion with him, *Psal. 119. 63. I am (though a King) a Companion of all them* (be they never so mean in this World) *that fear thee, and of them that keep thy Precepts.* By these things then you see, that in Conversion there is an universal change wrought upon the sinner. Thus much may suffice to be spoken by way of Explication. The nature of true Conversion hath been opened unto you in the Propositions cleared, which are expressive of the Causes, Parts, Degrees, Subject of true Conversion.

We come now to demonstrate the Point, *sc.* That a sound through Conversion, is of absolute necessity to the Souls entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. And this is proved, 1. From plain testimony of Scripture. The words of this Text
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(if there were no more) are a plain proof of this Doctrine, they stand like a Flaming-Sword, to keep all Unconverted sinners from any hopes of entring into lost Paradise: See also *John 3. 3.* *Jesus said, Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* Mark how every word is solemn and weighty, *[I] say unto thee, [I] that am Truth it self; [I] that never spake, nor can speak an untrue, or an idle unprofitable word [I] say unto thee, and this with a Verily; and that doubled, Verily, verily, except a man,* that is to say, any man whatsoever, be he high or low, be he learned or unlearned, *if he be a man,* except he be born again, it's not only true that he *shall not*, but that he *cannot* see the Kingdom of God: Therefore also the Apostle hath said, *that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God*, *1 Cor. 15. 50.* Meer Nature, or unsanctified Nature can never go to Heaven. And indeed all the threatnings in the Word of God, are evidences of this truth: The Law threatneth sinners with most certain death, *Gen. 2. 17.* And the Gospel denounceth no less then Eternal Damnation, against every Unbeliever, *Mark 16. 15, 16.* Therefore without Conversion, there can be no Salvation.

Argum. 2. Because a Natural Unconverted man, hath no Interest in *Jesus Christ*: There is no Salvation to be expected, but by Christ, *All*

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4.12. *neither is there Salvation in any other; for there is none other name under Heaven, whereby we must be saved.* If ever a man would get to Heaven, he must be sure to go in at the right door: Now Christ is that Door; *John 10. 9.* Christ himself there saith, *I am the Door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.* And again, *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, John 14. 6.* Men may imagine there are divers ways which lead to Heaven; but it will be found true, that there is, and always was, but one way to Heaven, and that is the way of Faith unfeigned in Jesus Christ the Son of God. Now as for a Natural Unconverted man, he hath no real Interest in Christ; he is a miserable stranger to the life of union and communion with the Son of God: Therefore the Apostle, declaring what the *Ephesians* were by Nature, saith, they were *without Christ, Ephes. 2. 12.* and the same Apostle saith to the *Corinthians*, *If any man be in Christ, he is a new Creature, 2 Cor. 5. 17.* They therefore that are not become *new Creatures*, but do remain still in their old, natural, sinful estate, are not in Christ; and therefore living and dying in their present states, they shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Argum. 3. *Because one sin, if loved and lived in, will certainly exclude the Soul out of Heaven.* This Text doth plainly intimate, that that one sin of unmortified Pride, is enough to keep out
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of Heaven. The like may be said concerning any other sin; one wound may kill a man, as well as a hundred; one leak will as certainly sink a Vessel to the bottom of the Sea as many: So one lust, if loved and lived in, will kill and sink a mans Soul for ever: Therefore the Scripture saith, *Repent and turn from [all] your Transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruine*, Ezek. 18. 30. Though a sinner should turn from many Iniquities, if there be but one sin left behind unturned from, that one will prove the utter and Eternal ruine of his Soul. This is the undoing misery of many, that go far, and bid fair for Heaven, that they leave one unmortified lust behind, which becometh their ruine at last. *Jesus* went far, but there was a lust of Ambition left in him that was never subdued. *Judas* went far, but there was a lust of Covetousness never mortified in his heart. *Herod* went far, and did many things, but there was a lust of Uncleaness that he was never delivered from; and by this means did these men all lose their precious Souls. Know therefore for certain, that if there be but one lust loved and lived in, that will exclude out of Heaven. Though a mans sin should be as dear to him as his right hand, or his right eyes if he do not forsake it, he must be cast into *Hell-fire*, where the *Worm dyeth not*, and where the fire never shall be quenched, Mark 9. 47, 48.

Having

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Having opened and proved the Point, we proceed, in the Lords seat, to make some Application of it. Now by way of Use, 1. *We may hence infer, That they that are truly and thoroughly Converted to God in Christ, are in a very happy condition.* There are two things here that do shew the happiness of such Souls: 1. In that *a Kingdom is theirs*, they do enter upon a Kingdom; therefore sincere Converts are called, *The children of the Kingdom*, Matth. 13. 38. they are such children as have a Kingdom for their Inheritance. Amongst men, *a Kingdom* is the highest Dignity; so to shew the glorious happiness wherewith such shall be dignified, they are stiled Heirs of a Kingdom. 2. Another thing which sets forth their happiness, is *the quality of the Kingdom* which they shall possess, *it's an heavenly Kingdom*: The Text calls it, *the Kingdom of Heaven*. All earthly Kingdoms are as nothing, compared with this. This Kingdom of Heaven noteth three things; all which do set forth the wonderful happiness of truly Converted ones: 1. *It is a state of saving sanctifying Grace*: Oft-times in Scripture, the being brought out of a state of Nature into a state of Grace, is called, *entering into the Kingdom*, Col. 1. 13. Mark 11. 31. For then men are delivered out of Satans, and are become Subjects of the Lords Kingdom. Now they that are brought into a state of Grace are happy indeed:
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For Grace is Heaven begun; he that hath Grace, shall as certainly go to Heaven, as if he were there already; which may be one Reason why this Expression, of *the Kingdom of Heaven*, is put to signify a state of Grace. 2. *It may note the Glory and Dominion which the Saints shall possess at the last and great Day*, Luke 22. 29, 30. *I appoint unto you a Kingdom — You shall sit upon Thrones judging, &c.* which evidently intimates, that at the Judgement-Day the Saints shall have a *Kingdom*. And no doubt this is a special thing aimed at in the Text, as will appear to him that well considers the occasion of these words: And though the Judgement shall be in this Lower visible World; yet this is fitly called the *Kingdom of Heaven*, because it will be a most heavenly Dispensation; also in respect of the Original of it, the God of *Heaven* will set it up. *New Jerusalem cometh down from God out of Heaven*, Revel. 21. 2. In a word, at the Last-Day, Converted ones shall be so many *heavenly Kings*; therefore happy are they. 3. *This Expression may note, that Eternal Bliss which the Saints shall enjoy with Christ in the highest Heaven.* Many times in the Scripture, *Heaven and the Kingdom of Heaven*, noteth that life of Glory which the Saints shall partake of with Christ in Heaven to all Eternity. And this also is intimated here in the Text, to be the Portion of Converted ones. And besides these things which

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which the Text expresseth, there are other things that manifest the happy estate of such persons. For thirdly, *They are the children of God.* Christ proveth, that Peace-makers are blessed, because they are the children of God; *Mat. 5. 8.* Now then are Converted ones blessed, for they are the children of God; therefore are they said to bear his Image; *Col. 3. 10.* even as a child bears the Image of his father. Hence, after the Prodigal was converted, the Lord saith of him, *This my son was dead, but he is alive again,* Luke 15. 24. So then God then owneth him for his Son. All the men and women in the World are divided into these two ranks, either they are *the children of God*, or else they are *the children of the Devil*, 1 John 3. 10. Natural men are still the Devils children, Scripture calls them so: But as for Converted persons, they are Gods children, and therefore happy.

4. *All their sins are pardoned: Blessed is the man whose transgressions is forgiven, whose sin is covered: Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity,* Psalm 32. 1, 2. Now this is true concerning all that are indeed converted, *Rom. 8. 30. Whom he called, them he justified.* Where there is effectual Calling, or Conversion, there is Justification, which implieth the *Remission of sins*; yea, though a man may have been guilty of never so many and great sins, yet if he truly repent of them, and turn from

from them unto God in Christ, they shall all be pardoned, *Isa. 55. 7.* We see it in *Paul*, he was *the chief of sinners*, yet he found mercy, that is, pardoning mercy (for by Mercy, forgiveness is many times meant in the Scripture) upon his Conversion to Christ, *1 Tim. 1. 14, 15.* And *Mary Magdalene* (if she were the person spoken of, *Luke 7. 47.*) was a great sinner, yet when she truly repented, and turned to the Lord, *her sins, which were many, were forgiven*: Yea, more let me say, though a man had been the greatest sinner in the World, if he *truly and thoroughly* Convert from the evil of his ways, and turn to God in Jesus Christ, the Lord will take him into his favour, and be as fully reconciled to him, as if he had never committed any such sins: This we see also in *Paul* and *Peter*, though both of them had transgressed heinously (as before was said) yet when they Converted, God took them into his favour; and to shew that he was fully reconciled towards them, he employed them in his service, and made them instrumental in the Conversion of many a Soul.

Use 2. *We may likewise see by this, the woful misery of all those that remain in an Unconverted estate.* But every one will be ready to say, Unconverted persons are miserable indeed, as being such as shall be excluded out of Heaven. But *are we not all Converted, are we not all Christians?* Alas Friends, deceive not your own

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Souls, I do beseech you : But therefore know,
 1. *They that remain ignorant in spiritual things are unconverted, 1 Cor. 2. 14. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned :* So that they that are unacquainted with the things of the Spirit, are in their natural estate still. What shall we think of those then, that mock and deride at the workings of Gods Spirit upon the Soul in its first, or in after Conversion ? And what shall we say of those that remain ignorant in Fundamental Points in Religion ? Some, though they live under Gospel-Light, yet are so, if they be examined about the great matters of Religion, especially about Christ, they bewray lamentable ignorance. Certainly, if ye are not *turned from darkness to light*, ye are not Converted, *Acts 26. 18.* And if the Soul be without knowledge, it is not good, *Prov. 19. 2.* It's not possible for the Soul to be entred into the Kingdom of Heaven, and yet to live in darkness and ignorance still. 2. *They that are Profane either in heart or life, are unconverted. Esau was a Type of all natural irregenerate men ; and he is called a profane person, Heb. 12. 16.* Alas, how many such are there, whose hearts slight and despise Spiritual blessings, even as Profane Esau did ? Oh the secret Profaneness and Atheism of the hearts of men and women ! Whence is it that many live in a careless neglect of God, and of
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the things of God, and of their own Salvation by Christ, but from the Prophaneity and Atheism of their hearts? *Psal. 14. 1, 2.* So as for all those that live in any scandalous sins against the first or second Table of the Law, it is certain that they are not Converted. Hence the Apostle speaketh as you find, *1 Pet. 4. 3, 4.* *The time past of our lives may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable Idolatries, wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot.* So that when they were converted, they quite left off their prophane courses that once they had lived in. All you therefore that are Drunkards, or Lascivious persons, or that follow any other Prophane courses, except you be Converted, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. 3. They that have nothing beyond Civility and Morality, are in an Unconverted estate. There is a Generation risen up of late, who give out, as if *Saving Grace* and *Morality* were the same. But woe to that man's Soul, that shall either say or think so: Certainly, there is a difference between a *mere Moral man*, and a *true Christian*. Many *Heathens* have excelled as to *Moral Endowments*. Nay, that Apostate Infidel *Julian* the Emperor, yet as to *Moral Accomplishments*, was a rarely qualified person; But shall we say, that that Enemy

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of Christ had Grace in his Soul? It's true, that *Morality* is good and lovely, yea, and such persons are nearer to *Conversion* than prophane ones are, *Mark* 12. 34. yet this may be without Grace. The young man in the Gospel was a very *Civill, Moral Man*, but he lacked saving Grace for all that, *Luke* 18. 21, 22. The Pharisee was no *Extortioner*, nor *Unjust*, nor an *Adulterer*, nor like the *Publican*; and yet for all that, in his Natural, Unconverted estate, *Luke* 18. 11. Paul before his *Conversion*, was touching the righteousness of the Law blameless, *Phil.* 3. 6. They therefore that bless themselves in their Condition, only because none can say to them, that black is their eye, or charge them with any scandalous miscarriages in their lives, are in an Unconverted estate. 4. So likewise are they all whose Religion is nothing else but Education. Alas, there are many that are deceived with this; All their Religion is the meer Impression of a godly Education, without any special work of the Holy Spirit upon their Souls. Not but that a Religious Education is a great mercy, yea, and to many of the Elect it is the great means of their Conversion. But when Education alone is rested in, without experience of a Regenerating work of the Spirit, then a mans case is sad. There are, that because they were born of Christian Parents, and baptized, and when grown up, profess the Christian Religion which they have

have been educated in, therefore they think that they need no other Conversion. Like that *Prelate*, who when one was converted before him for going to hear out of his Parish Church; the man alledging, that the Reason why he did it, was, because the Minister whom he went to hear, was the Instrument of his Conversion, and therefore he could not but love to hear him preach. *How* (said the Prelate) *Converted by him? Wert thou a Jew, or wast thou a Turk, that thou shouldst talk of Conversion? Art thou born an Englishman, and a Christian, and dost thou speak of Conversion?* Thus, I say, many Christians are like *Nicodemus*, who thought that the Doctrine of Conversion amongst the Jews, that were by Education and Profession the People of God, was a strange Doctrine, *John 3. 5, 6, 7.* There are many Christians that have no Religion or Conversion, but such, as if they had been brought up amongst *Jews*, they would have been *Jews*; if amongst *Mahometans*, or *Papists*, they would have been so too; only through the efficacy of Education, in Conjunction with natural Devotion, they make some shew of Christianity, without ever experiencing the saving operations of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, whereas he that is converted indeed is *born of the Spirit*, *John 3. 6.*

Lastly, *They all, whose Religion is, in being of this or that persuasion, are in an Unconverted*

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State. True it is, that men must be of a right Perswasion and Belief in the Fundamental Points of the Christian Faith, or they cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. But though *Orthodoxy*, in respect of *Judgements*, be necessary, yet it is not sufficient unto Salvation: Nevertheless, there are some Christians, that if we take from them *this or that particular Opinion* in some lesser Points, all their Religion is gone. This is sad; What saith the Scripture? *Gal. 6. 15. In Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a new Creature*: So that a man may be of that *Party or Perswasion* which are for Circumcision, or of that *Party or Perswasion* that are against Circumcision, and yet not be a *new Creature*. If therefore all a mans Religion lieth in this, that he is for or against Circumcision, the case is sad with him: for he is no new Creature, no true Convert. Some there are, that their Souls are undone with the *Monopoly of an Opinion*, their Religion is all imparties. And Oh that there were not need to speak of this amongst us also! Some, if they be of the *Anabaptist* Perswasion, here's all their Religion; others, if they be *Independants* (as the World speaks) here's all their Religion; others, if they be against this or that Superstition, here's all their Religion. Alas, alas! Conversion doth not consist in these matters only; if therefore these things be the main of ones Religion, that's a sure

sure sign, that his *Conversion* was slight and over-ly, and that he hath not attained to that *sound and thorough Conversion*, which the Text and Do-ctrine speaketh of.

Now then we come a little to spread before you the woful misery of all such Unconverted Souls. Know then, 1. That *as long as thou art Unconverted, all the sins that ever thou didst commit in thy life, remain unpardoned*. Hence is that Mark 4.12. *Left at any time they should be Converted, and their sins forgiven them*. So that sins are not forgiven, except there be Conversion: therefore thy Soul is in a miserable case; for any one of thy sins, though it were the least sin that ever thou didst commit in thy life, yet if it remain unpardoned, the guilt of it is enough to sink thy Soul down into the Bottomless Pit: What then is like to become of thee, since all thy sins, thy numberless sins, thy great sins, lie in bank against thy Soul, not so much as one of them forgiven? 2. *An Unconverted sinner hath no Friend*: He hath no Friend in Heaven; God, in whose favour is life, is Enemy to such a sinner: *Natural men* are called the *Enemies of God*, Rom. 5. 10. Col. 1. 21. Oh, to be out of Gods favour, that's misery indeed. Hence *Cain* cryed and roared at the doleful apprehension of his wretchedness, when he saw himself cast out of Gods favour: Oh, saith he, *my punishment is greater than I can bear, for I must be hid from the face of*

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God. This is thy very doom, that art in thy Natural, Unconverted estate. And in as much as God is thy Enemy, all Creatures in Heaven and on Earth are so too, *Hosea 2.18.* yea, there is a secret Curse upon all thy enjoyments. For 3. *Thou dost nothing else but sin against God:* An Unconverted sinner never thought one good thought, nor spake one good word, nor did one good action before God in all his life: His Civil Actions are sins, *Prov. 21. 24. The ploughing of the wicked is sin:* So his Natural Actions, his eating and drinking, &c. is sin: Nay, his Religious Actions are sins, his praying, and hearing, and fasting, and reading, all are so many sinful abominations in the Lords sight, *Prov. 15. 9. & 28. 9. Psal. 109. 7.* A Natural man may do, and speak, and think many things, which for the matter of them are good; but as done by such a person as is out of Christ, they are not good, but evil in the sight of God. Certainly, this would be an *awakening Consideration*, if sinners would think sadly of it: Canst thou make light of this, that look how many actions there have been done by thee in all thy life time, how many words thou hast spoken, how many thoughts have been in thy heart, so many sins art thou guilty of, and must one day answer for them all! Lastly, *Thou art in a state of Death and Condemnation.* A Natural man is dead in trespasses and sins, *Ephes. 2. 1.* A poor sinner hath all the

the miserable properties of a dead man belonging to him. As now a dead man cannot stir or go, so it is with a sinner, he cannot walk in the ways of God; one that's dead cannot hear, so a sinner is dead to all the Calls of Heaven. The Lord giveth many a loud knock and call, yet the sinner heareth nothing; the reason is, because he is dead. Again, a dead man cannot speak, so it is with a sinner, he hath no ability for spiritual discourse: This is the reason why some of you live in the neglect of Prayer. The Word hath told you many time, that you must pray in your Families, and in your Closets too, and you go with convinced Consciences that this is your duty, and yet you do it not; why? you say you cannot: I would pray in my Family, but I cannot. Alas poor Creature, I believe thee; for thou art dead in sins, and how should a dead Creature speak unto God in Prayer? Yea, and an Unconverted sinner is not only under spiritual death for the present, but he remains under a sad Sentence of Eternal Death, *John 3. 18.* *He that believeth not is condemned already:* It's not only true, that he shall be condemned hereafter, but he is so *already*. The Sentence of death is *already* pronounced against him, and shall as certainly be executed upon him, *if he turn not*, as if it were already done. Oh consider and tremble at it, all you that live in sin. I must tell you, for I should not be able to hold up

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up my head before the Son of God another day, if I should forbear to tell you the truth, and therefore I tell you plainly and truly, If any person amongst you, man or woman, be they high or low, rich or poor, shall not turn from sin, yea, and from all sin, Eternal death shall as certainly be your portion, as if you were already in Hell.

Use 3. Let such a solemn Truth as this, put us upon serious and impartial *Examination* about this Point, whether we be indeed Converted or no. Sure it is no wisdom for us to let a matter of such moment lie at uncertainties; yet such madness is in the hearts of many of the sons of men, that they go on carelessly, although if they should dye in their present condition, they know not whether their Souls must for Heaven, or for Hell, as not minding whether they be in a Converted, or an Unconverted estate. But Oh, put this matter to the Tryal, and come to some certainty about your Spiritual and Eternal states.

You'll say, *But how shall we know whether we be Converted or no?*

Ans. 1. Try by that Character which the Text doth afford; viz. That Converted persons become *as little children*. Look, as little children are come into a World, where they never were afore; so 'tis in Conversion, the Soul *begins the World anew*, as it were, and the sinner leads a new life which

which before he was not acquainted with. Hence is that Expression, *Rom. 6. 4. Walk in interest of life.* Particularly, there are divers properties in little children, which set forth a Converted person; e. g.

1. *Humbleness of mind*: A Child hath no ambitious high designs in his heart, only minds lesser matters. Hence David saith, *Psal. 131. 1, 2. Lord my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty, neither do I exercise my self in great matters, or in things too high for me: Surely I have behaved my self as a child that is weaned, my soul is as a weaned child.* David was accused, as if he had had ambitious aspirings after *Saul's Kingdom*; But, saith he, I am as free from those Imputations as a child that is but a weanling, who hath no such aspirings in his thoughts. Now this humbleness of mind, is a special thing intended in the Text by Conversion. Unmortified Pride is a Soul-damning sin: yet there is no sin more natural, or more hard to subdue than Pride; its the first that liveth, and the last that dyeth. Hence the work of Conversion is well expressed in the Text, by the Mortification of that one lust. And oft in the Scripture, a *Natural man* and a *Proud man* are the same, *Mal. 4. 1.* and a *Converted man*, and an *Humble man* are also the same, *James 4. 6. Luke 18. 14. He that humbles himself shall be exalted.* That humbling noteth Conversion.

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2. *A Child is teachable and tractable* : A Child is far more easily brought under Discipline, than an elder person that was never used to it. Thus it is with a *Convert* : He is become marvellous teachable, ready to be led with the Word and Spirit of God : It is said of such, *Iſa. 11.6. A little child shall lead them.* Now then consider, will the least word of God awe you, and lead you this way or that way? Though the Instrument be never so contemptible, yet if he bring Scripture along with him, doth the Authority of that carry you before it, this is a good sign.

3. *Children are apt to forget wrongs* : Hence is that, *1 Cor. 14. 20. in malice be ye children.* You often observe that Children, though they fall out never so, yet in a little time all will be forgotten, and they will become as good friends as ever they were. Truly, he that cannot forgive wrongs, hath no Grace in his heart ; so if a man hath *a forgiving spirit*, it's a good sign ; yea, if a man doth freely forgive those that wrong him, and if he doth it out of Conscience to the Holy Commandment of God, and out of a sense of the Grace of God towards him, in pardoning of his many sins, it is one of the clearest evidences of a true Child of God that can be given. This hath Christ taught us, *Mat. 6. 14, 15. For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you : But if you forgive them not their trespasses, neither will*

Your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasser. So that you see it holds true both in the Affirmative, and in the Negative, That a *forgiving spirit* is an Evidence of a true Child of God; and the want of this, an Evidence of the contrary. But besides these Characters which the Text doth afford, some other things may be mentioned as marks of *Trial* here. Therefore,

2. *Try this matter by the greatness of the change which is wrought in Conversion.* You heard in opening the Point, how Conversion doth imply an universal change: Is it so with you? Have you new heads, new hearts, new words, new thoughts, new lives and all? Moreover, the change wrought in Conversion is universal, in respect of entire obedience unto all Divine Commands, and an utter forsaking of every false way. Therefore it is said, *the fruit of the Spirit is in [all] goodness, &c. Ephes. 5.9.* Where the Spirit hath wrought Grace, there is *all* goodness: Such a Soul doth practise *all* duties, and forsake *all* sins. It is indeed the greatest change that men are subject to. It is a marvellous change which death brings along with it; hence *Job* calls his death *his change*: It is so by way of eminency, *Job 14. 14.* But Conversion brings a greater change with it: For at death the change is only in respect of place and degree, &c. But in Conversion there's a change wrought in respect of state and kind, *Eph. 5.8. Ye were sometimes dark-*
ness,

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As now are lights in the Lord. There are new
and quite contrary qualities wrought in the
Soul, so as the sinner Converted differs as much
from the sinner Unconverted, as light differs
from darkness. For,

3. *If a man be Converted, then his nature is*
changed; therefore such are said to *partake of the*
Divine Nature, 2 Pet. 1. 4. Such an one doth
not only new acts, but there is in him a new
nature, from whence these acts do proceed. He
hath not only new practices, but a new princi-
ple. Hence it is in some sort *unnatural* for a
Converted man to sin, that is, so far forth as he
is regenerate, 1 John 3. 9. *Whoever is born of*
God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in
him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.
And it is natural unto him to do good, and to
endeavour to please God. Hence Paul saith to
the *Philippians* concerning *Timothy*, that he did
naturally care for their estate, Chap. 2. vers. 20.
This was, because *Timothy* was a Converted,
Gracious man, and so a new Nature was con-
ferred upon him. Had it not been for Convert-
ing-Grace, such a care as that was, had never
been natural to him.

4. You may try whether you are Converted, by
that *spiritual Combat* which is peculiar to the Re-
generate. It is with a Child of God, as it was
with *Rebecca*, in whom there was a *Jacob* and
and an *Esa*; or as it was with the house of
Abraham,

Abraham, where there was an *Isaac* (and an *Ishmael*): So it is with the heart of a Christian, there is a Regenerate and Unregenerate part conflicting and combating, the one against the other, *Gal. 5. 17.* Now if there be Spirit lusting against the Flesh, that is a sure sign that there is Spirit; only there is a dangerous delusion here, which many deceive themselves with; they take the Reluctancy of a natural enlightened Conscience against sin, to be the spiritual Combat, which is peculiar to the Regenerate, but these differ much. As to the ground of the opposition, there is a difference; the one opposeth sin, because of the vileness and filthiness of its Nature; the other only, or chiefly, for fear of punishment. It may be illustrated by this familiar Comparison: Some men are loth to meddle with coals of fire, because of filth which is about them; others never stick at that, only because of fire, lest haply their fingers should be burnt, they are loth to meddle. So it is here, a Natural man would never fall out with sin, because of the filth of it, only there's fire in sin, which would burn his Conscience, if he should meddle with it, and therefore he forbears some acts of sin; but the sincere Convert is acted from another Principle. There is also a difference as to the evils opposed; for when the Conflict is only from an enlightened Conscience, the evils opposed are wont to be more gross and vile; but in the spiritual Combat,

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bat, seemingly little sins are mourned under, even vain thoughts are a wearisome burthen. In the one, only some sins are opposed; in the other, all sin. So likewise there is wont to be a difference, in respect of the continuance of the opposition: That which proceeds onely from an enlightned Conscience, is wont to be but now and then, perhaps when some gross sin hath been committed, or the like; but the spiritual Combat is constant, and without Intermission.

Use 4. Let it be a word of Exhortation, *Ob Convert your selves to God in Christ.* Consider therefore the happy condition of all Converted ones; Of this you heard in the first *Use*. Consider the misery of the Unconverted: Of this you heard in the second *Use*. Consider also the absolute necessity of this Conversion; you [must] *be born again*, John 3.7. There's a *must* for it; you *must* be so, or else be shut out of Heaven to all Eternity: Of this you heard in the Demonstration of the Point which hath been insisted on.

A word or two or more let me say, 1. *Remember that you are in continual danger of ruine, as long as you remain unconverted.* It is a dangerous thing for any man to defer his Conversion one day, or but one hour. I have sometimes put you mind of an Expression of Mr. Balcanquhall, who said, *He would not be in the condition of an unconverted*

unconverted man one hour, though he might have all the world for it, lest haply death should come upon him in that hour, and so Repentance be too late. Oh methinks, I would not be in my Natural, Unconverted estate again one moment, though I might have ten thousand Worlds for it, lest Death should seize upon me in a moment, and to my Immortal Soul be lost. Think sadly of it, you that know not what the *new birth* meaneth: If death should find thee in thy present condition, it had been better for thee never to have been born; better for you never to have been born, than not to be *new born*; yea, it had been better for thee to have been a Dog, or a Toad, or a Serpent, or the vilest Creature in the World, than to dye in a Natural, unconverted estate: For these doleful Creatures when they dye, see an end of their misery; but when thou dyest, thy misery begins; when once thy Immortal Soul is out of thy body, thy endless and caseless woes will come upon thee, without any hope of remedy. 2. One word more I must needs say unto you, and therefore be it known unto you, that if any of you will venture on still in your trespasses, *so as to dye in your sins, your blood shall be upon your own heads.* I remember what the Lord said to his Prophet, *Ezek. 3. 17, 18, 19. Son of man, I have made thee a Watchman unto the*
E *house*

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house of Israel, therefore bear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me: When I say unto the wicked thou shalt surely dye, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, the same wicked man shall dye in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand: Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall dye in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul. Now then let me deliver my Soul this day, Behold, I do here in the name of the Lord solemnly and earnestly warn every sinner amongst you, that you make haste to turn unto God in Jesus Christ; and I declare to you, that if you do it not, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. God before whom I stand, and holy Angels that are here present, and all this Assembly, shall bear me witness at the Last Day, that warning was given to you: Now if you will not take the warning, at your peril be it. And I have rejoycing in my own Soul, that this is not the first time that I have given you warning, but many a time, yea, without ceasing, for the space of these ten years, that the Lord hath upheld me amongst you, you have been told of these things. Now I call Heaven and Earth to
record

is of absolute necessity, &c. 31

record this day, that I have set before you Life and Death; therefore *choose Life, else your blood will be upon your own heads.*

• *Object.* But some will say, *We cannot convert our selves.*

Answer. Yet observe these two Rules:

1. *Put away all vain thoughts of being in a good estate already.* Many might have been converted, if they had not taken up with a false and groundless persuasion of their being in a good and converted estate already: This was the ruine of the Jews and Pharisees especially, *John 9. 2. ult.* Remember that Conviction of Misery, is the first step towards Conversion. We see it in the Prodigal, *Luke 15. 17.* he cryed out, *I perish*; Thou must see that thou hast *a perishing, dying, damning Soul*, and then there's hopes of a right Conversion.

2. *Go to God for Converting Grace,* say as *Ephraim* did, *Jer. 31. 18.* *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned*: And go and pray, as for thy Life and Soul, which lies at stake until the Lord convert thee: Suppose thou wert condemned to dye a natural death; if the Judge should tell thee, if thou would pray and beg hard for thy life, thou shouldst have

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it. Oh how wouldst thou pierce the Heavens with thy crys: So it is here, thou art condemned to dye an everlasting death; nevertheless, the Lord saith, If thou wilt pray and seek to him for life, the Sentence may yet be reversed. Therefore do thus before the Decree come forth, *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near.*

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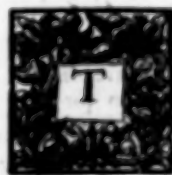
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They that live unprofitably under the Gospel, are in a very dangerous condition.

Hebr. 6. 7, 8.

For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.



The scope of the Apostle in this Chapter, is to exhort the believing Hebrews unto Constancy in their Profession of the Christian Faith, and to debort and dissuade from all Apostacy therefrom: And this he doth by setting before them the benefit of the one, and the evil and danger of the other.

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The danger of Apostacy is here very awfully described, by shewing, that they that are *wilful and total Apostates* from the Truth, cannot attain unto Repentance, but they must lie under the Curse of God to all Eternity: And this the Apostle proveth by three Arguments; 1. From the Immutability of the Council of God; hence he saith, *It is impossible for such to be renewed by repentance.* He doth not only say, that it shall not be, but that it *is impossible* that it should be; which Expression may respect the unalterable Determination of God to the contrary, which maketh the thing impossible. 2. *Because they crucifie to themselves the Son of God afresh*; that is to say, they do it as much as in them lieth: And therefore, either God must give another Christ, or Christ must come again to suffer and satisfie for their sins, neither of which shall be, or else such sinners must remain under the Curse eternally. 3. The Apostle proveth this, by shewing the Justice and Equity which is in such proceedings; and that is done in these words, which are *Antilogical*, they give a sufficient Reason for that which before was asserted. Lest any one should think this hard and unreasonable, he doth in these words, by a familiar, and yet elegant Comparison, taken from that which is customary amongst men, and applied to Divine matters, both *illustrate and demonstrate the point.*
The

The sum is this; *We see* (saith the holy Apostle) *that men if they bestow much pain in tilling a piece of ground, and yet it will bring forth no good, but abounds with evil fruit, they do even execrate such ground, and forsake it, and at last make fuel of it; and therefore God may well deal so with sinners.*

The words being a continued *Allegory*, we shall a little open some of the *Terms*, before we come to the Doctrine from them.

By the *Earth* here spoken of, *men* are signified; so in the Parable of the Sower (*Mat. 13.*)

By the *Ground* men are signified, who are indeed fitly compared to the *ground*, because they are the subject of a *Divine Cultivation*. The earth is tilled and dressed, so are men in a mystical sense: Seed is not sown in any Element but the *earth* only; not into the fire or water, but into the moulds of the *earth*: So the seed of the Word is dispensed amongst no other Creatures but men; only its true the Gospel is said to be *preached to every Creature*, because the Hebrews were wont to call *Man* by that name of *Creature*: So that by every *Creature* is meant, nothing else but men of all sorts. Again, *Man* is a poor *earthly Creature*; so he is in respect of his original, and in respect of his end; therefore God said to *Adam* after his fall, *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return*, *Gen. 3. 19.* Hence

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men are fitly compared unto, and resembled by the earth.

By the *Rain* here spoken of, we are to understand, the Gracious Dispensations of God: In special, his word, and most of all, *the Word of the Gospel*: The word of God is frequently in the Scripture compared unto *Rain*, Deut. 32. 2. *My doctrine shall drop as the rain; my speech shall distill as the dew as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers on the grass.* Hence is that phrase of *dropping the Word*, Ezek. 21. 2. *Amos* 7. 16. *Mich.* 2. 6. And fitly is the Word of the Gospel compared unto rain; for rain, if it fall upon good ground, causeth much fruitfulness, *Psal.* 65. 10, 11. *Isa.* 44. 14. so doth the Word, when it falleth into good hearts: The rain cometh from Heaven, *the Heavens* do (though not of themselves) give *showers*: Thus concerning the Word, it cometh *from Heaven*, the Ordinances of the Gospel are the influences of Heaven: as it was said concerning *Johns Baptism*, that it was from Heaven, so are we to say concerning all the Ordinances of the Gospel. Hence *Mat.* 9. 3. it is said of the poor in spirit, that *the Kingdom of Heaven* is theirs.

Further, By *Thorns* and *Briers* here, are signified the sins and corruptions of men: So *Mat.* 13. 7. it is said *the thorns choked the word*; where by *Thorns* are meant, those sins of Voluptuousness

luxuriousness and Worldliness. The *corruptions* of men are fitly resembled to *thorns* and *bryers*, because these are wont to spring of themselves. Bad and barren ground, doth naturally produce such things; even so sin and vice is natural to men. *Thorns* and *bryers* are unprofitable things, there is little use of them; even so the sins of men are *unfruitful* (or unprofitable) works of darkness, *Ephes. 5. 11*. Sin is good for nothing; it is good neither for a mans body, nor for his soul, nor for his name, nor for his estate, nor for any thing; yea moreover, *thorns* and *bryers* are hurtful, they will tear a mans clothes, wound his flesh, and prejudice the ground where they grow; so the sins of men wound their souls, and are prejudicial to others where they are committed. *Thorns* and *bryers* are the more hurtful, for that they are of a spreading nature, and hard to be got out of the ground where they are rivetted; this is the nature of many evil habits: So it is with the corruptions of mens hearts, if once a vice be rivetted in a mans soul, its marvellous difficult to root it out from thence. But I must not stay here, nor shall we stand upon any further opening of the words, besides what may be spoken to under the *Deduction* from them, which is this;

Doctr.

Doctr. That those men who live under the influence of the Gospel, and the Ordinances thereof, and yet either bring forth no fruit, or only evil fruit, are in a very dangerous condition.

In the Doctrinal prosecution of this point, three things may be attended: 1. To shew what fruitfulness it is, which is required under the Gospel. 2. How it doth appear, that they that remain unfruitful under the Gospel, are in a very dangerous condition. 3. Wherein the danger of being unprofitable under the Gospel doth consist.

Qn. 1. What fruitfulness is it which the Gospel requireth?

Answer. 1. There is an inward fruitfulness, which is in inward qualities and dispositions of Soul. In inward, gracious frames of heart, true saving, sanctifying Grace is spiritual fruit, Gal. 5. 22, 23. *The fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance.* Good fruit is pleasing to the taste; these precious Graces are the fruits which are pleasing to the Holy Ghost. Where there is a sound Conversion unto God in Christ; I say, where there is sincerity, there is this inward fruitfulness. It is said of the godly man, that he shall bring forth fruit in season, and his leaf

leaf shall not wither, Psal. 1. 3. Bearing fruit, is opposed to bearing leaves only: *Leaves* note outward *Profession*; *Fruit* noteth inward *Sincerity*: This then is that which the Gospel requireth, and the fruit which it brings, when it cometh in power, Col. 1. 6. *The Gospel brings forth fruit in you*: this fruit was their faith in Christ, and true Conversion to God by him: They were changed from Sinners, into Saints; they were brought out of a state of Nature, into a state of Grace, by the power of the Gospel; therefore it is said, that the Gospel brought forth fruit amongst them.

2. There is an *outward fruitfulness*: that is, when not only a mans heart, but his *life* also is *conformable to the will of God in Christ*. Thus good works are called fruit, Col. 1. 10. *Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, bring fruitful in every good work*: Therefore the Scripture speaks of *the fruits of righteousness*, Phil. 1. 11. because if a man do the works required by the Law of Righteousness, after an Evangelical manner, this is such fruit as pleaseth God. And this also is required under the Gospel; hence when *John* preached the Gospel, he said, *Bring forth fruits meet for repentance*, Matth. 3. 8. See (saith *John*) that ye walk according to the Rule of the new Creature; let your Practices, Lives, Conversations be such, as that it may appear, that your Profession of Repentance is
found

sound and sincere. The Gospel doth require not only Faith, but Obedience also (and indeed where the one of these is in sincerity, the other will be too) it calls for both internal and external Obedience, even for Faith and Works: Both these are here signified in the Text by that phrase of, *herbs meet for him by whom it is dressed*. Men are (as was said) the Earth, God is the Dresser of this Earth: He is compared to an Husbandman; the Herbs or Fruits which is meet for such a Dresser, are Grace and Holiness, Faith and Obedience in heart and life.

3. *The Gospel doth require, not only such fruit as hath been expressed, but moreover, that men should be abundant therein*: I say, an abundant fruit-bearing is requisite for men, living under the gracious Dispensation of the Gospel. Hence the Apostle in this Epistle to the *Hebrews*, ch. 12. vers. 14. &c. doth from this Argument press unto Holiness, even because they were not under the Law, but under the Gospel. Holiness (saith he) was required under the Law, but how much more under the Gospel? The more God hath done for you, the more ought you to do for him: That special favour which the Lord hath bestowed on you, in bringing you under the gracious Dispensation of the Gospel, should be an engagement upon your hearts to so much the more Holiness. *It is a great measure of Holiness, which the Lord looks for from New-Testament*

ment-Believers; therefore did Christ say, *Bear much fruit, so shall ye be my Disciples*, John 15. 8. Men do not act as becometh the Disciples of Christ, except they bring forth much fruit; they do not walk as becometh the Gospel, except they be very holy. New-Testament Believers have (*ordinarily*) a far greater measure of light and knowledge in Divine things communicated to them, than was given (*ordinarily*) to Old-Testament-Believers; and therefore more Faith and Holiness is required to be found in them. God did bear with such Infirmities, Ignorances, Carnalities in his people, in the days of old, before the coming of Christ, as he will not bear with now under the Gospel: It is requisite, that men should be answerable to the Dispensations of God towards them, Luke 12. 48. *Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.* Now they that are intrusted with the Gospel, and Ordinances thereof, much is committed to them: If seed be sown in a rich soil, men expect much fruit; they that are planted in the House of the Lord, as all that enjoy the Gospel and Ordinances thereof in their power, purity and glory, are so, are planted in a rich soil indeed. Ground which is plentifully watered, should be abundantly fruitful: They that live under the blessed distillations of Gospel

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spel-Ordinances, are plentifully watered, *Isa.* 49, 10. *He shall lead them by the springs of water*: What are those springs of water, but the Soul-refreshing Promises and Ordinances of the Gospel? Hence Christians are compared to *watered Gardens*, *Isa.* 58. 11. A Garden which is often watered, it is expected that it should be exceeding fruitful: So then ought Professors of the Gospel to be.

We proceed therefore unto the *Second* thing; and that is to enquire, *How it doth appear, that unprofitableness under the Gospel is a very dangerous evil.*

I shall only mention two Arguments, evincing the truth of this.

1. *Because they that slight the Gospel, are the greatest and most guilty sinners in all the World.* The greatest sinners are in danger of incurring the dreadfulest Condemnation: Now so are they that live under the Gospel, and yet slight it, such sin at high and dear rates indeed; for they sin against light, as *Job's* phrase is concerning some, *They rebel against the light*, chap 24. 13. Had it been possible for them, they would have plucked the Sun out of Heaven, that their wickedness might not have been discovered: So Despisers of the Gospel, are *Rebels against the light*; yea, against the highest and most spiritual light that ever shone upon men. When Christ preached the Gospel in some dark corners

in the Land of *Judah*, it is said, that *the people which sat in darkness, saw a great light*, Matth. 4.16. The light of Nature is but a dark glimmering light, and the light of the Law was dark, compared with that of the Gospel; but now the Gospel is the most Clear, Divine, Spiritual, Glorious Light that ever shone into the hearts of men. Hence if men despise it, their sin, guilt and danger is most fearful; yea, and such persons do not only sin against the clearest Light, but against the highest Love that ever was. It was a wonderful Evidence of Divine Philanthropy, even of the love and kindness of God towards mankind, Tit. 3.4. that he should find out a way for sinful men to come unto Salvation, and by the Gospel he discovers this way. Now to slight the kind offers of God, must needs be hainously evil. God sheweth special favour to that people, upon whom he bestoweth the Gospel and Ordinances thereof, *Psal. 89.15. Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance*: The silver Trumpets under the Law, by which the people were called together, at the times appointed for Sacred and Solemn Assemblies, did typifie the Gospel and holy Ordinances thereof. It is a blessed thing to be often hearing the joyful sound, which is made by the silver Trumpet of the Everlasting Gospel; such have the light of Gods countenance

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nance towards them, God from Heaven seems to look on them with a pleasant, favourable countenance. Now then to slight this favour, that is dangerous, *Rom. 2. 4. 5. Despisest thou the riches of his goodness—After thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath.* They that live impatiently under the Gospel, they despise the riches of Divine goodness; therefore cannot expect other, but that treasures of wrath will be laid up against them, and one day laid out upon them. In a word, this sin of slighting the Gospel, is virtually and causally all sin; for all a mans other sins would be forgiven, if this were not superadded to the rest. If men did embrace the Gospel, they should also receive the Remission of sins. Unbelief is the greatest sin that ever any of you were guilty of in your lives: This binds the guilt of all sins against the Law, upon a mans Conscience for ever: Now by Unbelief is not meant, the doubting, whether our sins are forgiven, but the refusing of the motion of the Gospel, when the Gospel freely offers Christ and Pardon; Life and Heaven with him: Now to neglect him, and lie out from him, to prefer the World, or it may be, a base Lust, before the blessed Son of God, this is that Unbelief which provoketh God more than transgressions of the Law doth.

2. *Because to slight the Gospel, is to sin against the remedy.* There is but one only Remedy in all the World for a poor sinner; namely, that which the Gospel tells us of, *Acts 4. 12.* Neither is there Salvation in any other; for there is none other name under Heaven given amongst men whereby we may be saved. Now for a man to reject a Remedy, and an only Remedy, that's exceeding dangerous. Suppose a man to be poysoned, yet if he hath a Sovereign Antidote offered to him, he may do well; but if he shall foolishly and wilfully refuse this Antidote, then his case is dangerous, deadly, desperate: Thus it is here, all men are poysoned with sin, that deadly venome of sin, the old Serpent hath poysoned the whole World with it: But now the Gospel brings an Antidote against this Poyson, even the precious Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; he that shall refuse this Antidote, will certainly perish. If the children of Israel when they were stung in the Wilderness with the fiery Serpent, had not regarded the Brazen Serpent, they had certainly perished; thus then to refuse the Gospel, is to sin against the only remedy: As Ely said to his sons, *If one man sin against another, the Judge shall judge for him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him, 1 Sam. 2. 25.* So if a man sin against the Law, the Gospel may help him; but if he despise the Gospel, what help then is left

for him; so that this is a dangerous evil. But the truth of this will appear further, in speaking to the third thing; that is, in shewing wherein the danger of unprofitableness under the Gospel doth consist.

In what respect is unfruitfulness under the Gospel and Ordinances thereof dangerous?

Ans. 1. *There is danger, lest the Lord should be provoked hereby to take away his Gospel.* The abuse of mercies, provoketh the Lord to take them away: So the Lord threatens them, *Hosea, chap. 2.* that because they had abused Temporal Blessings; *Therefore, Vers. 9. I will take away my corn, and my wine,* saith God. Will the Lord take away food for the body, if abused, and will he not much more deprive men of spiritual food for their Souls, if they be not thankful and fruitful under these enjoyments? hence Christ said to the Jews, *The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a Nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, Matth. 21. 43.* meaning, that the Word and Ordinances should be taken from them, and be given to the Gentiles; had they not been unfruitful under the means of Grace, it should never have been so. And this was long before it came to pass, foretold by the Prophet, *Isa. 5.* The Lord there tells what he would do to his unfruitful Vineyard, *Vers. 5.* he saith, he would *break down the wall thereof:* Now the Word and Ordinances were

as a wall of Distinction and Separation, whereby *Israel* was differenced from the Heathen Nations; and again, *Vers* 6. the Lord saith, that *he would command the clouds, that they should rain no more upon it*; that is, that they should be deprived of the Ministry of the holy Prophets: Therefore afterwards we hear that people complaining, that they had not *their signs, there was none to tell them how long, no Prophet amongst them*, Psal. 74. 9. This was a just punishment for their unprofitableness: And you know the Lord told *Ezekiel*, that he must become dumb, because the people were rebellious, *chap.* 3. 26. the Prophets of God must be stricken dumb, yea, and dead too, they must be carried down to the place of silence, because the house of *Israel* is a rebellious house. This is that sin which brings many a precious Minister into his grave, that might have lived long, and done much service in his Generation; Oh but *the unprofitableness of a disobedient people killeth their Minister.*

2. They that live unprofitably under the means of Grace, are in fearful danger of the curse. This is expressed in the Text, when it is said, that such an one is *nigh unto cursing*; every moment of his life, the Eternal Curse is ready to seize upon his Soul; he is as nigh to the execution of the Curse, as he is to death, which in a moment shall overtake him. As there is but one step between him and death, so there

is but one step between him and the Curse. In this respect it is true, that all sinners (I mean all that in respect of their state are such) are nigh unto cursing: But more especially this is true concerning such sinners, as live unprofitably under the precious means of Grace; hence is that, *1 Cor. 16. 22. If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema Maranatha*: By one that loveth not the Lord Jesus Christ, is meant such persons as are spoken of in my Text, even Despisers of the Gospel; men that have heard of the excellency of Jesus Christ, and yet care not for him; now so living, and so dying, *Let him be Anathema Maranatha*: As if it were said, Let him be accursed in Heaven, and accursed on Earth, curse him all ye Angels in Heaven, curse him all ye Saints on earth, and let those curses remain upon him, until Dooms-Day. Moreover, God is wont to be quick and speedy in punishing sinners under the Gospel: So *Mal. 3. 5. I will be a [swift] witness against you*: It is there spoken against Carnal Gospellers, so *Revel. 2. 5.* In this respect, Gospel-despisers are truly said to be nigh unto cursing.

3. Such persons are in danger of being *Judicially given up to everlasting unfruitfulness*: This is the Curse here spoken of. That ground which is barren, is called *Cursed earth*, *Job 24. 18.* hence such are said to be *rejected*. That which is execrable and *Anathematized*, is forsaken

saken, even so such sinners are *forsaken* of God for ever. The Lord doth never punish sin more dreadfully, than when he doth punish sin with it self. So it is here, the Lord by a Judicial act doth punish sin with sin: This was their sin (saith God) that they were unfruitful under fruitful means; and therefore this shall be their punishment, they would not profit by what they did enjoy, and therefore this shall be their plague, they shall be given up to *everlasting barrenness of Soul*. There is an awful Scripture to this purpose, which we shall a little open to you as we go along; it is that Ezek. 47. 11. *The miry places, and the Marishes, shall not be healed, they shall be given to salt.* By *miry places*, are meant such earth as that which my Text speaks of: In *miry places*, the water and the earth mix together, the water hath not a free passage, but stands and corrupts there; even so when the waters of the Sanctuary, that is, the Doctrine of the Gospel hath not a free passage through the hearts of men, but the Word cometh to the ear, and there it stops, and doth not run through their hearts and lives, but the Word mixeth with the corruptions of men, that they can hear Sermons, and keep their lusts too, these now are *miry places*. Observe then the judgement of God upon them, *they shall not be healed*; that is to say, they shall never be converted. They would not be converted, this

was their sin; therefore they shall not be converted, this shall be their punishment, *but they shall be given to salt*; that is, to barrenness of Soul. *Salt* signifieth *Barrenness*, Deut. 29. 23. it's said *the land was salt*; i. e. Barren. Thus then are unfruitful Hearers of the Word in danger of being judicially given up by God to everlasting Barrenness of Soul: Therefore when Christ saw a figtree, and found nothing on it but leaves only, he said unto it, *Let no fruit grow on thee hence forward and for ever*, Mat. 21. 19. The Son of God that hath eyes like a flame of fire, he looks into the hearts of men; and if he find that there's nothing but the leaves of an outward Profession, but no fruits of Saving Faith and Repentance, though they have enjoyed the means of Grace, now the Lord secretly passeth this heavy doom upon such souls; saying, *Never let fruit grow upon such a sinners hence forward and for ever*. He would not believe, therefore never let him believe; he would not be converted, therefore never let him be converted.

4. Unprofitable hearers of the Word are in danger of utter ruine, Luke 13. 6, 7. *A certain man had a Fig-tree planted in his Vineyard; he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none: Then said he to the Dresser of his vineyard, Behold these three years I come, seeking for fruit on this Fig-tree, but find none, cut it down, why cumbereth*

it *the ground*. So that unfruitful hearers of the Word, are in danger to hear that Sentence, *Cut it down*: Inasmuch as they hear Sermons, and yet will not repent and believe, therefore *down with them* (saith God;) their bodies *down* to the Grave, and their souls *down* to Hell, *Down with them*! Thus did *John* Baptist preach to the unfruitful Jews, *Matth. 3. 10.* Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down. Such Trees, such Professors of Religion, as either bring forth no fruit, or nothing but leaves of Profession, or else only evil fruit, shall be *hewn down*! yea, such are in danger of, being cast into Hell-fire; therefore *John* addeth further, *and cast into the fire*. And this is also expressed in the Text, when it is said, *whose end is to be burned*; that is to say, this is the end, even the event which shall befall such earthly Christians, that they shall be thrown into the fire, which never shall be quenched. You know in some Countreys they burn *Turf*: The earth which is altogether unfruitful, is made use of for fuel; thus doth the Lord say concerning men, either let them be for *fruit*, or else for *fuel*. As the Prophet speaketh concerning the Vine-tree (*Ezek. 15.*) that if it do not bear fruit, it is fit for nothing else but the fire: So for Christians, either they must bring forth fruits of faith and holiness, or else they must be made fuel for the fire of Divine wrath to feed upon to all Eternity. But

more may be spoken to this purpose, in the Application of the Point. Because I would finish at this time, I shall only mention one use of the truth.

Use. And let it be a solemn word of warning and awakening, to every soul that beareth me this day. Ob beware of living unprofitably under the Gospel and means of Grace which you are made to partake of. Consider what hath been spoken concerning the greatness of this sin, and consequently the dreadful danger which is therein. Is there any man willing to be cursed, rejected, burned? If not, in Gods fear take heed that you do not remain unfruitful under those showers of Heaven, which from day to day fall upon your Souls. Remember also, that unfruitfulness is the ready way to be deprived of Gospel-Ordinances, and all the means of Grace. Sometimes indeed God doth take away men from the means, because of this sin; hence the Lord striketh them with sickness, that they cannot come abroad to the publick Assemblies of his people, though they would; nay, with death it self. Thus we see in the *Corinthians* (ch. 11,) though they were true Believers, and such as should not be condemned with the World at the great Day; yet because they did not come to, and profit by that Ordinance of the Lords Supper as they should have done, therefore sickness and death beset them. Sometimes again,
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God taketh away the means from men, because of this sin, Oh, *I fear, I fear, I fear*, this will be the Judgment of God upon *New-England*! I confess sometime, when I have not before my coming into the Assembly had any such thought in my heart, yet as I have been here standing and speaking before the Lord, such words as these have been, as it were forced from me; but now I do upon saddest deliberation speak it. Alas, alas! how are many Professors amongst us too like the *Gergesens*, Matth. 8. 34. that prized their Swine above Christ: Thus do men value their Possessions in the World, above Christ and Gospel. Hence it is that so little encouragement is given to the Gospel all the Countrey over: (I am sorry to speak of these things, did not Conscience and Duty constrain me to it) which is a sad evidence, that the Lord Jesus will depart from these Coasts ere long; yea, and there are already lamentable symptoms of the Lords departure: God is never wont to remove his Gospel and Ordinances all at once, but by degrees; but now there begins to be a scarcity of Spiritual Food amongst us already. Look into Plantations round about, and consider how it is; There was a few years ago a Lecture at *Dorchester*, and at *Dedham*, at *Braintree*, &c. But it is not so at this day. All these places (*and many other*) had Ministers and Sacraments amongst them, when

when as now they are deprived thereof. Besides, our woful declinings from *First-love* to Christ, and to his holy Institutions, and to one another, are a sad sign, that the Lord intends to remove his *Candlesticks* out of this place, Rev. 2. 5. What do these things portend, but that these *Bethels* will become *Bethavens*, it may be ere this Generation be passed away? But besides these things which have been insisted on, let me spread before you a few *Awakening Considerations*, which should cause you to dread this sin of Unprofitableness under means of Grace.

Consider. 1. *That you are not, you cannot be Christians indeed, except you be fruitful.* It is given as the Character of a *false Christian*, or an Hypocrite, that though he be a *Branch in Christ*; that is to say, a *Professor* of the true Christian Religion, yet he bears no fruit, John 15. 1. And it is noted concerning those unsound Professors, which proved Apostates at last, that they were *unfruitful*, Jude 12. Those that have indeed an interest in Christ, are always fruitful: *They that are married into Christ, bring forth fruit unto God*, Rom. 7. 4. If therefore there be not a bringing forth of this fruit, that's a sure sign that the soul was never married to Christ, never united unto him by faith, never had a saving interest in him. It may be said of every true Believer, as was said of *Onesimus*, Phil. 11. *In time past unprofitable, but now profitable*: So a sinner

sinner before his Conversion, is an unfruitful Creature; but when once he is effectually brought home to God, then he is profitable: If he be (as *Onesimus* was) a servant, he is a profitable Servant; he labours to conform himself to the will of God, and so to please God in every thing; whatever Relation he stands in, he brings forth fruit according to that Relation, endeavouring to answer the duties of that Relation; never say or think that you are Christians, if it be not thus with you. Hence it is, that the Conversion of sinners is in the Scripture set forth by saying, *Instead of the Thorn shall come up the Fire-tree; and instead of the Bryer shall come up the Mistle-tree*, Isa. 55.13. that is to say, they that were before like the Thorn and the Bryer, even unfruitful, and unfit for any good work, shall become fruitful.

Consider. 2. *That many hearers of the Word are altogether unprofitable.* Yea, the most by far are so; so we read in *Matth. 13.* concerning four sorts of ground, and but one of them good; that is to say, four sorts of hearers of the Word, and there are three to one that are bad. Oh, how should this *awaken*! And alas, if we look into the World we shall find, that indeed it is thus: As it was said of *Ephraim*, that he was an *empty Vine*, that brought forth fruit unto himself; thus is it with many, yea, with the most of men, nay of Professors, they bring
 forth

forth fruit to themselves, to the World, to Satan, but not to God. How is it with many of you? you have leaves, and that's all, even Profession without Practice; others of you, you bring forth the fruit of Morality and Civility, and that's all; you bless your selves that you are no Drunkards, no Adulterers, no Swearers; but I beseech you consider, Morality and Civility alone, is no saving Evangelical work; you may have this, and yet fall short of that fruit which the Gospel requireth: There are others, that instead of good, they bring forth evil fruit, even *Thorns* and *Briers*. Are there not lamentable Divisions and Contentions amongst us? such fruit is *Thorns* and *Briers*. Behold, the Lord hath planted a Vineyard amongst us, *Psal.* 80. 8. 9. &c. may marvellously be applied unto us: *God hath brought us as a vine out of Egypt, he hath cast out the Heathen, and hath planted us, he hath caused this vine to fill the Land;* But alas for us! we have been an unfruitful vine, How may the Lord complain against us, as against his people of old, *Isa.* 5. 2. *He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes:* So hath it been with us, *wild grapes* have been brought forth, Prophaneness, Drunkenness, Uncleaness, Swearing, Unlawful Gaming, &c. Oh, how may we tremble to think what God *will* do.

Consider. 3. *That the Word and Ordinances, if they do not good, they will occasion much hurt unto us.* Certain it is, that the Ordinances, if powerfully dispenced, shall have their effect and operation upon the hearts of men, *Isa. 55. 10, 11.* *For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from Heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth fruit, and bud, that it may give seed to the Sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my Word be, that goeth out of my mouth, it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing wherewith I sent it.* Ordinances, if they do not soften, they will harden; if they do not convince and convert, they will blind the minds of men, and seal up their Souls under secret wrath. Hence the Apostle saith, *2 Cor. 2. 15, 16.* *We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one are we a savour of death, unto death, and to the other, the savour of life unto life.* Oh, how would men and women sit trembling under Sermons, if they did believe, that they were about a matter of life and death, yea, a concernment of everlasting life, or everlasting death. Sermons shall have their effect upon the hearts of men, either to save or to damn their Souls, *Isa. 6. 9, 10.* *Go (saith God to the Prophet) make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut*

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shut their eyes, lest they convert, and be healed. Mark, I beseech you, was there ever a more dreadful word spoken? one would have thought, that if the Prophet spake to them, it should have been only, that they might have been converted; but the Lord by a Judicial hand upon them for their Unprofitableness, sent his Prophet to harden their hearts, *lest they should be converted.* So for Sacraments, they will have their effect upon mens Souls, either for life, or for death. We read of *Judas*, that after he had received the Sop, Satan entred into him; even so, when you have been at the Lords Table, if Christ do not enter into you, Satan will; either Christ or Satan will come and take a fuller possession of your Souls: Believe it, Sermons, Sabbaths, Lectures, Sacraments, they shall all of them work, either for life, or for death.

Consider. 4. *Long continued Unprofitableness under the means of Grace, is a sad sign of Reprobation.* I tell you truly, this is one of the blackest marks of an Eternal Cast-away, 2 Cor. 4. 3. *If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.* If the Gospel be withheld from a people, its a sign they shall perish; or if it be sent to them, yet if in the life, and power, and saving efficacy of it, it be hid from mens Soul, that's a sign that they shall be lost: It is an *awakening word* which you may find, Jer. 6. 2. ult. *The bellows*

bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain, for the wicked are not taken away, reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them: As if it were said, God and man, even the Lord by his Prophets, hath bestowed much labour about this people, and yet they continue wicked still, therefore are they to be looked upon as *Reprobate* and rejected ones. Christ tells the Jews, that the reason why they did not believe was, because they were *not of God*, John 8.47. and because they were *not sheep*, John 10.26. that is to say, because they did not belong to Election. If men live long unprofitably under means of Grace, this is a sad token that they do not belong to Election. Indeed secret things belong to God, and therefore it is no absolute Conclusion, that if a man live many years under the powerful preaching of the Gospel, and yet is not converted thereby, that he shall never be converted, yet it is a sad suspicion. God calls his Elect, some at one age, some at another, but generally before old age, especially where men live under the Gospel. Oh gray-headed sinners, tremble at it before the Lord this day, and let this word at last awaken you.

Consider. 5. *That as for your parts, God hath bestowed much means upon you, and taken much pains with you.* The rain hath often fallen upon you,

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you, outwardly you have had *Jacobs* blessing, Gen. 27. 28. *God give thee of the dew of Heaven.* Behold the showers of Heaven, have fallen upon you; some of you have lived all your days under blessed Influences; you have had Religious Education, you have been born and bred under Gospel-light, and Gospel-Ordinances. Hast not thou heard a thousand Sermons and more, since thou hast been in the World? there are many of you that have so. But in the name of God, are you converted? or are you still in the state of nature? or if you think you are converted, do you then grow in Grace according to the means which you have enjoyed? you have had the Gospel, when others in the World have been deprived of it: As you have been beyond others in Priviledges, are you beyond them in holy Conversation and Godliness? Oh that it were so!

Consider. 6. *That the Lord keeps a strict account what means are afforded to you.* God took notice against the Jews, that they had lived above twenty years under the Prophet *Jeremias* faithful Ministry, *Jer.* 25. 3. whatever Talents are bestowed on you, assure your selves, that the Lord will call you to an account for all one day: Thus *Luke* 13. 7. *Behold these three years I come seeking fruit, and find none:* The Lord taketh notice how many years you live under means, yea, how many Sermons are preached
to

to you. Oh, are there not some of you, that have lived, not only three years, but three times three years and more, yea, twenty, thirty, some of you forty years under the precious dew of Heaven, and yet no living fruit to be seen on you to this day: Oh, this is exceeding lamentable.

Consider. 7. and lastly, *That if you should dye in your sins, you will incur the worst condemnation that ever was.* God forbid that it should be so; yet I dare not but tell you, that in case you dye without true Repentance, and sincere Faith in Jesus Christ, of all Creatures upon the face of the Earth, you will become the most miserable. Hearken secure hard-hearted sinners; all you Christless, Graceless Creatures, that are here before the Lord this day, tremble at this word. It is said concerning *fruitless Christians*, that they shall be *cast into the fire and burned*, John 15.6. One would think that there were no need of saying, *they shall be burned*, after it was said, *they should be cast into the fire*; but that is to shew, how sore the punishment of such sinners shall be. Remember that word, Matth. 23. 34. *Thou Capernaum which art exalted unto Heaven shall be brought down to Hell: It shall be more tolerable for the Land of Sodom in the day of Judgement, than for thee.* How were they exalted unto Heaven, but in respect of the measure of Grace? They did for sometime

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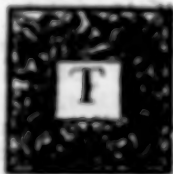
live under the Ministry of the best Preacher that ever was upon the face of the earth, or that ever shall be; yet because they brought forth no fruit but thorns and briers, they were to be cast down into the deepest place in Hell. Oh! thou impenitent Wretch, it will be more tolerable for the vilest Wretch in *Sodom* at the day of Judgement, than for thee. What saith the Scripture? *Heb. 2. 3. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation.* The *Salvation* of the Gospel, if it be but so much as neglected, there will then be no escaping the wrath of God. If *Salvation*, yea, *great Salvation*, and *so great Salvation*, be neglected, there will be no escaping of wrath to the uttermost. See then that you refuse not him that speaketh from Heaven; for if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on Earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from Heaven.



It is the great Interest of men,
to hear and open to Christ,
when he stands knocking at
the door.

Revel. 3. 20.

*Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any
man hear my voice, and open the door, I will
come into him, and sup with him, and he
with me.*



These words are part of that
Epistle, which the Lord Je-
sus Christ sent from Heaven
to the Church of *Laodicea* in
which Epistle He doth both
convince and exhort them.
First he convinceth them, and
that of two evils; especially, 1. Of their For-
mality and Hypocrisy, *vers. 15, 16.* 2. Of their
Pride and Self-conceit, *vers. 17.* Having con-
vinced them of these evils, he proceeds (in
G 2 *vers.*

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vers. 18, 19.) to exhort them unto Repentance, and that they would repair to him for help and healing of these things, which were amiss among them, and which he had reprov'd them for.

In this Verse that Exhortation set down, in the two foregoing Verses, is further urg'd from a double Argument, 1. From the gracious opportunity which they then had, inasmuch as Christ was then amongst them; in the first part of the Verse. 2. From the good and benefit which would come thereby; in the latter part of the Verse.

For opening of the words, before we come to the Doctrine from them, we shall only enquire, what is here meant by the *Door*, when Christ saith, *If any man open the door, &c.*

What is this Door?

Answer. Thereby the *Heart* is signified. Hence the Scripture speaketh of opening the heart: It is said of *Lydia*, that she was one whose heart the Lord opened, Acts 16. 14. The words are a Metaphor from the opening of a Door. The Door is that by which men enter into the House: So it is by the Heart, that the Lord enters into a man to take possession of his soul. A Christian is compared to an House; now the Heart is the Door of that House. Moreover, the Doors or Gates of Cities in old times, were the strength thereof: So is the Heart of a man his

his strength. The Gates were places of Authority, men were wont to sit in Judgement in the Gate; so the Heart bears Authority over the whole man: And Gates were for Consultation; so is the Heart, therefore we read of the *Counsels of the Heart*. The *Heart is the Counsel, Strength, Authority* of the whole man. Hence it is, that if Christ hath not the Heart, he hath nothing: Though he should have a mans Judgement, Tongue, Conscience, Estate, if he hath not his Heart, he is kept out of Doors still.

Doctr. That when Christ doth stand and knock at the door of the hearts of men, it is, as their duty, so their interest, and will be their happiness, to hear and open to him; or, That it is the great interest of men, to hear and open to Christ, when he stands and knocks at the door of their Souls.

In the Doctrinal prosecution of this Point, four things may be attended: 1. To shew what is implied in Christs standing at the door and knocking. 2. How or by what means Christ knocketh. 3. What is implied in hearing Christs voyce, and opening to him. 4. How it doth appear that they are happy that receive Christ; or, that it is the interest of men so to do. To all these briefly.

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Quest. 1. What is implied in Christs standing at the door and knocking?

Answer. 1. Herein is implied, *That Christ is not so far entertained as ought to be.* As for every sinful man, either Christ is out of his heart *totally*, so it is as to those that are in a state of sin and unbelief, *John 1. 11. He came to his own, and they received him not;* The unbelieving Jews gave no entertainment to Christ, but they shut him wholly out of doors, as it were. Faith and Repentance doth open the door to Christ: so Sin and Unbelief doth shut the door against him; hence the Apostle saith to the *Ephesians*, that by Nature they were *without Christ*, *Ephes. 2. 12.* The natural man is out of Christ, and Christ is out of him; or if Christ be not out of doors wholly, yet he is so *comparatively*. Of some Christ is not at all entertained; of others, not so much as he should be. There is a *first* and a *further* entertainment of Christ; the one of these concerns Unbelievers, the other Believers. The Saints themselves may give a further entertainment unto Christ; hence Christ knocks at the door, even that he might have yet further entertainment. As in great houses there are many rooms; there are rooms of common entertainment, and there's a Closet for a mans self, and his intimate Friend. Thus it is here, Christ would be admitted, not only into the out-rooms of the
Soul

Soul, but into the very Closet; that is to say, into the heart. Hence he knocketh, because men do not give him so much of their hearts as they ought to do. Therefore,

2. This knocking implicth, *That Christ seeketh to come in*: He desireth admittance into the hearts of men, This knocking is attended with a motion, that the door might be opened; as you may see in that Parallel Scripture, which the words of the Text seem to allude unto, namely, that *Cant. 5. 2. My Beloved knocketh, saying open to me.* Hence also in the Text, Christ doth not only say, *I stand and knock at the door*; but addeth, *if any man hear my voice*: So that with this knocking, there is a voyce, a call, a motion from Christ, that the door of the heart may be opened. As men sometimes, before they knock at a door, they call and say, *Who is within there? Who keeps house?* Thus doth Christ call upon sinners, saying, *Who is within in that heart? Who is the House-keeper? Is there any room for me there? Shall I come and lodge in that Soul of thine?*

3. Herein is implied, *That Christ doth even stay and wait upon sinners*, that he may do them good. This is here intimated by *standing*, *I stand at the door and knock*: This standing is a Waiting Posture, the Greek word *ἵσταμαι*, is as much as to say, *I have stood, and do stand still*: Christ doth not come and knock at the door

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once, and then away again presently, but he *standeth* there. The words note *then*, not only that Christ maketh a motion of mercy to poor sinners, but moreover Constancy and Affiduity in the motion; therefore he saith, *Isa. 65. 2. I have spread forth my hands all the day long.* Such is his wonderful Patience and Grace, as that he is pleased to stand knocking at the door, as it were, from morning till night, even *all the day long*: Whence it is also said, that *the Lord waits to be gracious*, *Isa. 30. 18.* He waits upon sinners, till he hath run through a course of means of Salvation with them. As a Physician doth attend upon a Patient, until he hath run through a course of Physick, and then indeed he giveth him over, when he seeth there's no good to be done upon him: So doth the Lord deal with the Souls of men; he waits also even till the sinner hath run through a course of sin and wickedness, many a sinner, until such time as he hath quite filled up the measure of his sins, Christ doth *wait* to be gracious to him, thus doth he *stand* at the door.

Quest. 2. *How or by what means is it that Christ doth knock and call at the door of the hearts of men?*

Ans. 1. Christ knocketh at the hearts of men by *his Word*; by this Epistle he knocked at *Laodicea's* door: Hence in the Text Christs voyce is spoken of. When Christs *Voyce*, his Word

Word is heard, then is he *knocking* at the hearts of men; therefore the Word is compared to an Hammer, *Jer. 23. 29. Is not my Word like an Hammer, &c.* An Hammer you know is an Instrument, whereby men sometimes knock and break open doors: So doth the Lord by the Hammer of his Word, knock and break open the doors of the hearts of sinners. The Lord knocks by the Promises of the Word, and by Threatnings also, these are *knocking, awaking* words indeed; so by Instructions and Exhortations, &c. Hence it is, that as for all men that enjoy the Ministry of the Word, whosoever they be that have the Gospel dispensed amongst them, Christ knocketh at their doors, and desireth entrance into their hearts.

2. Christ knocketh by his *Works*. There is a secret voyce of the Lord to the Soul in every Providence, though few hear it, few understand it. As now by *mercies*, *Rom. 2. 4. The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.* It should be so, this is Gods end in bestowing mercies and good things upon the Sons of men; it is thereby to *awaken* and to stir them up to Repentance, that the Lord and they might come together. That Preservation, Provision, Protection, which the Lord in his gracious Providence is pleased to afford unto sinners: Those common mercies which he bestows upon the vilest of men, Food and Rayment, Health, Wealth, nay, every meals

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meals meat, and every nights rest and sleep, by all the Lord is knocking and calling upon men, that they would learn to know, and love, and serve him, that giveth all good unto them; as it is said *Prov. 18. 16. A mans gift maketh room for him*; even so Christ seeks for a room in the heart, by the gifts which he bestoweth, and is therefore most worthy to be received with the highest entertainment.

Again, the Lord knocketh at the door by *Afflictions*, as we see in this Context, *Whom I love, I rebuke and chasten* (saith Christ) and then it follows, *I stand at the door and knock*. How? even by chastening Dispensations of Providence: Therefore is that *Mic. 6. 9. Hear ye the rod*. Affliction is Gods rod; and an iron rod it is, whereby the Lord doth, as it were, rap at the door of secure sinners. If the Lord afflicteth a man, he *striketb and giveth blows*: Hence David saith, *Remove tby [stroke] from me, I am consumed by the [blow] of tbine hand*, *Psal. 39. 10.*

3. Christ doth call and knock at the doors of mens hearts, by the voyce of his Spirit: It is said, *Isa. 30. 21. Tbine ears shall bear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk therein*, &c. namely, a word spoken by the secret whisperings of the holy Spirit, saying to the sinner, Thou art out of the way; if ever thou desirest to be happy, thou must forsake this way thou

thou art going in, and turn into a new, and another way. This is partly meant by the voyce which my Text speaketh of, namely, the voyce of Christs Spirit: Sometimes a poor Creature begins to think seriously with himself, Am I in Christ, or out of Christ? Am I in a state of Nature, or in a state of Grace? If I should dye in this condition, what would become of my poor Soul? Secret thoughts are darted into the heart of a sinner, that it is high time for him, to think of making his peace with God: He doth, as it were, hear a voyce behind him saying, *Man look about thee*, there's one thing needful, and thou neglectest that, and in the mean time art taken up about needless vanities: Now these are the secret whisperings of the Spirit of Christ, whereby he knocketh and calls upon the hearts of men.

4. Christ knocks and calls upon the heart, *by the voyce of Conscience*. A mans Conscience is Gods Messenger, whereby he knocketh at the door, and speaketh home to the heart, *Prov. 20. 27. The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching the inward parts of the belly*. So that the inward parts of the belly, that is to say, the most secret corners of the heart, are ransacked by the spirit of a man, by which the Conscience is meant. And when Conscience speaketh, the Lord speaks also; for Conscience is Gods Messenger (as was said) it cometh arm-

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ed with Authority in his name; and hence is said to be the *candle of the Lord*, because it is of the Lords sending and setting up. The voyce of Conscience is many times a roaring voyce, whereby the Lord doth *Awaken* the most secure and sleepey sinners. Conscience hath a Commission, that I may so speak, not only to knock at the door, but if need be, to break the door down, rather than that the sleepey sinner should not be *awakened*.

Quest. 3. *What is implied, in hearing Christs voyce, and opening to him?*

Ans. 1. Herein is implied, *a regarding what Christ saith*: It noteth a diligent attention, even a listeniug unto Christs voyce: This is called *hearkning* and *considering*, Psal. 45. 10. *Hearken, O Daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear*. A man may hear the voyce of Christ, and yet slight all that he heareth of, or from Christ: So it was with the Jews, and so it is with the greatest part of them, at whose doore Christ is pleased to knock: Hence Wisdom, that is Christ, complaineth, *I have called, and ye refused: I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof*, Prov. 1. 24, 25. But the hearing which the Text speaketh of, noteth due regard unto what is heard.

2. In this hearing *Understanding* is implied, even a discerning who it is that stands knocking and calling at the door: He that *beareth my voyce*, that is, that knoweth that it is the voyce of Christ which is speaking to him, as John 10. 3. *The sheep hear his voyce*; and then vers. 4. *For they know his voyce*, and vers. 5. *But they know not the voyce of strangers*. That then is meant by *bearing the voyce of Christ*, even a knowing that it is his voyce, so as to be able to discern it from all other contrary voyces: Except a man be able to distinguish, between the voyce of Christ, and of Satan; between the good motions of the Spirit of Christ, and the sinful motions of the evil Spirit, he cannot be said to hear and open to Christ. Thus the Spouse in the *Canticles*, *It is the voyce of my Beloved that knocketh*: Christ no sooner spake, but presently she knew whose voyce it was that called to her, *Canticles* 5. 2. So that acquaintance with the voyce of Christ is here included.

3. Herein also is implied, *yielding of obedience to Christ*. Hearing is oft-times in the Scripture the same with obeying, *Isa.* 55. 3. *Hear, and your souls shall live*; that is, obey, and you shall live: For hearing without obedience is as no hearing at all, *1 John* 4. 6. *He that is not of God, beareth not us*, that is, obeyeth not the Doctrine which we teach; and therefore

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is in the same, or in a worse condition, than if he had never heard any thing. Thus he that hears Christ, submits to the Authority of his Commands: Let me bear sway in thy heart, saith Christ; suffer me to bear rule in my own house, to be King in my own Throne: Now where Christs voyce is duly heard, the Soul doth not resist, but yields it self to this Command of his.

Therefore lastly, herein *Believing is implied*. The door is set open to Christ, when the heart doth by Faith receive him: Believing is nothing else but a free, willing, kind entertainment of Christ into the heart, *John 1. 12. To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God: And who are they? Even to them that believe on his name:* They that in the beginning of the Verse are called *Receivers* of Christ; in the latter part of the Verse are called *Believers* on him: When the door of the heart is freely set open for Christ to come in, and lodge there, this is believing. As a Friend willingly sets open the door to his Friend, he saith, *Is it you?* Come in with all my heart: When the Soul carrieth thus towards the Lord Jesus, saying, *Is it Christ that desireth admittance into my Soul?* Let Christ come in and take possession of my heart for his own for ever; this is implied in this hearing and opening to Christ.

Quest.

Quest. 4. How doth it appear, that they are happy, that do thus open to Jesus Christ?

Ans. Two things do abundantly evince this, both which are mentioned in the Text.

1. In that he that doth thus open his heart to Christ, shall have union with him: *I will come unto him*, saith Christ. Union with Christ is so described, *I will come to him*, saith Christ, so as to dwell with him, so as to live in him. I will come to him, not as a *Sojourner*, but as an *Inhabitant*. Such an ones heart shall be my house, *Ephes. 3. 17. He dwelleth in the heart by faith*. Now union with Christ is a blessed thing: Happy they that have this glorious Dignity belonging to them; for if a Soul be united to Christ, there is union with God also, the Eternal Fountain of all life and happiness. Hence is that *1 Thess. 1. 1. To the Church which is in God, and in the Lord Jesus Christ*. He that is in Christ, is in God also: If there be union with the Son, there is union with the Father; for the Son and the Father are one: Christ never cometh alone, but if he comes, the Father cometh with him; therefore Christ said, *If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and [We] will come to him, and make [Our] abode with him*, John 14. 23. Now Gods company is enough to make the Enjoyers of it happy, *Psal. 16. 11. In thy presence is fullness of joy: Perfect happiness is in Gods presence,*

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presence; and therefore also in Christs presence, seeing these always go together.

2. Another thing which doth evince the happiness of those that thus entertain Christ, as hath been opened to you, is that they shall enjoy *Communion* with him: This is here expressed by *supping*, *I will sup with him, and he with me*; that is to say, there shall be a mutual blessed *Communion* between Christ and such a Soul. *Receivers* of Christ, that is *Believers* on him, have Communion with him, *1 Cor. 1.9. God hath called us to the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.* This *Fellowship*, this *Communion* with Christ, is in respect of all his blessed benefits, Justification, Adoption, Sanctification, Glorification, all is here included in *supping* with Christ: It is as much as if it were said, Such a Soul as doth open the door, shall feed and feast everlastingly upon Christ, and upon his benefits; yea, this *supping* with Christ noteth, *Intimacy of Communion*: That Ordinance wherein Believers have that most intimate Communion with Christ, is called the *Lords Supper*; so this *supping* with the Lord, noteth free and full Communion together, even such as is between Friends that sit at the same Table together: And especially it noteth, those intimate embraces and unconceivable Communications, which shall pass between Christ and his in the World to come; the state of glory, and that full

full sweet Soul-satisfying Communion, which the Blessed shall in another World enjoy with Christ, is set forth by similitudes taken from Eating, Drinking, *Supping* or *Feasting* (for it was the Eastern manner in old times, to have their great Feasts, not at noon, but at night; not at dinner, but at supper :) I say the glory of Heaven is set forth by the similitude of a great and sumptuous Feast, so 'tis here in my Text. But thus much shall suffice for the Doctrinal handling of this point, we shall conclude only with one Use of *Exhortation*, and let it be in the words of the Psalmist, *Psal. 24. 7. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall enter in.* That Text indeed is firstly and typically to be understood concerning the doors of the Sanctuary being set open for the Ark to enter in, and then fulfilled, when the Eternal gates of the highest Heaven were set open, for Christ the King of Glory to enter in at his Ascension; and lastly are to be applied to mens opening the doors of their hearts, that Christ may come in there: Oh then be exhorted this day, to set open the everlasting doors of your Souls, that Christ the King of Glory may come in. And for that end consider seriously a few things.

Consider. 1. *That Christ is importunate in the motion which he maketh, that he might have pos-*

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Session of your Souls: Hence he continueth following the suit a long time, *Prov.* 1. 22. he there saith, *How long* ye simple ones will ye love simplicity? So that Christ doth wait, and that for a *long time* (Oh how long) at the door of mens hearts: And he reneweth his motion for entrance full many a time and oft, *Matth.* 23. 37. *How often* (saith Christ) *would I have gathered you, &c.* So how oft hath the Lord Jesus been knocking at thy heart, how many scores, how many hundred, how many thousand times? Hast thou not had many good motions in thy heart, and many convictions and awakenings upon thy Conscience? Hast thou not heard *many* Sermons, received *many* mercies, felt *many* afflictions? By all these now hath the Lord been knocking at that *heart* of thine. Now this importunity should be a *Motive* to prevail with you, to open your hearts unto Jesus Christ; for our importunity doth prevail with him, to open the door of Heaven to us, *Luke* 11. 5—10. therefore his importunity should prevail with us to open the door of our hearts to him. Shall our importunities prevail with Christ to open his door to us, and shall not Christs importunity prevail with us, to open our door to him?

Consider. 2. *That Jesus Christ hath right to enter in*; for the house is his own, at whose door he knocketh. If servants should rise up,
and

and in Rebellion shut their Master out of doors, how vile a thing were that? Why so it is when sinners do by unbelief shut Christ out of their hearts. You then refuse to let the Master of the house come within his own dwelling: Thy Soul is Christs *own House*; it is so in respect of right of Creation. As the Apostle speaketh concerning that house of the Church, it is *Christs own house, for he built it*, Heb. 3. 3, 4, so Christ hath built this house, he hath made thy Soul to be an house for himself to dwell in: And if thou belongest to Election, thy Soul is Christs, in respect of right of Redemption, 1 Cor. 6. ult. *Your spirits are the Lords, you are bought with a price*; your Souls are the *Lord Christs*, and that by right of Redemption: So that when Christ bids you open the doors, the Owner, and he that is Lord of the house demands entrance; Oh shut him not out of doors.

Consider. 3. *That Jesus Christ is worthy to be entertained by you*: He is so in respect of the Royal Dignity of his Person, *Psal. 45. 2. He is fairer than the children of men*. No man so excellent as the man Christ Jesus, yea, his excellency is above the Angels. If an Angel should come to one of your doors, you would be loth to shut the door against him: Behold, he whom all the Angels in Heaven worship; he, at whose glory all the Angels in Heaven are amazed, crying before him, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord of*

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Hosts, the whole Earth is full of thy glory; he knocks at the door, and wilt thou shut him out? Christ is God as well as man, he is the King of Glory, and the Lord of Host. And Christ is most worthy to be entertained, in respect of his goodness, as well as in respect of his greatness? If a good man should knock at your door, and you should see and know that it were such a one, a very precious good man, you would be loth to turn the door against him; And wilt thou turn the door against Jesus Christ, who is not only good, but Goodness it self? Again, Christ is worthy of entertainment, in respect of that Relation which he stands in: This motive is urged, *Can. 5. 2. Open to me, my Sister, my Spouse.* Will a Sister shut her Brother out of doors, or a Wife her Husband? yea, Christ is a Father. How horrible is it for Children to shut their Father out of doors? yet so, and worse then so it is, when Christ is not duly entertained in the hearts of men. To say no more here, Christ is worthy to be entertained, in respect of that which he hath done and suffered for his people: Oh, how much hath he done? he hath taken a long journey, that so he might be entertained in that heart of thine, and wilt thou shut him out at last? If a Friend should come from a far Country to visit you, sure you would not shut him out of doors? Behold Christ hath come from
Heaven

Heaven to the Earth to visit that Soul of thine, and wilt thou give him no entertainment? Nay, he hath given his life for thee, and that's more than the life of all the Angels in Heaven, and wilt thou not regard him now? Consider how great things he hath suffered for thy sake; he stands knocking, *till his head is filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night, Cant. 5. 2.* yea, he hath stood knocking at thy heart, not only with his locks filled with the drops of the night, but his body filled with drops of blood: Oh, then never shut him out of doors.

Confid. 4. *The exceeding benefit which you will reap by giving entertainment unto Jesus Christ.* There is nothing lost by shewing kindness to good men when they come to our houses; He that receiveth a Prophet in the name of a Prophet, shall receive a Prophets reward; and he that receiveth a Righteous man in the name of a Righteous man, shall receive a Righteous mans reward, *Mat. 10. 41.* But what reward must they needs have, them that shall receive the Son of God himself? *Behold I come (saith Christ) and my reward is with me, Rev. 22. 12.* The very company of a godly wise man is profitable; but what then is Christs company; Christ never cometh empty-handed into any house, into any heart; no, but he cometh with both hands full of blessings. We read that when the

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Ark was in the house of *Obed-edom*, God blessed *Obed-edom*; and blessed his house, and blessed all that he had, because of the Ark of God which was in his house. The Ark was a Type of Christ; thus then where Christ cometh, God blesteth that house, that heart, with all manner of blessings. Oh, consider, if Christ come into the house, he will bring provision with him; *I'll sup with him*, saith the Lord; your entertainment of Christ shall cost you nothing. Alas, the house is nothing but bare walls, before Christ cometh into it, but then it is full of provision; yea, if Christ be entertained, he will *protect* the house, as well as *provide* for it, *Phil. 4. 7.* The peace of God shall *keep your hearts through Christ Jesus*. Have not some of you your temptations, and your pangs of unbelief with them; and then you cry out (as *David*) *I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul;*) I shall one day perish by the hands of the Tempter, such a Corruption, or such a Temptation will be my ruine at last. My serious counsel to you is, get Jesus Christ into your hearts; and if Christ be there, let the Devil do his worst, you need not fear him, Christ will guard the house against all the Devils of Hell, he will defend thy soul against the Temptations of the evil one. In a word, if Christ come, he will bring Salvation along with him; therefore when Jesus Christ was

was received into *Zachens* his house, it was said, *This day is salvation come to this house*, Luke 19. 9. Oh happy house! Oh happy Soul! where Jesus Christ shall be entertained.

Consider. 5. *The evil and danger which is in refusing to entertain Jesus Christ*: Every knock that Christ hath given at thy door, will sink thy Soul so much the deeper into Hell, if thou refusest him now. You may slight Christ, but the day is coming, when slight him if you can or dare. They that were invited to the Marriage-Feast, *made light of it*, and went away, one to his Farm, and another to his Merchandize, &c. Matth:22.5. so now, when the motion of the Gospel is tendered to you, you may make light of it, and go away to your Shops and Ships, and buying, and selling, and never mind whether Christ be formed in you or no. But the day is at hand, when every neglect of Christ shall be heavier than Mountains of lead upon thy miserable soul. Be it also known to you, that if you will not hear Christ, now he will not hear you another day; see that solemn Scripture, and tremble at it, Luke 13. 25, 27. *When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, and to say, Lord, Lord, open to us: and he shall answer, I say unto you, I know you not, whence you are, depart*

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me all you workers of iniquity. Thus it will be at the last day, thou wilt cry, *Lord, Lord, open to me!* Oh, how thou wilt cry, *Lord, Lord, let me go to Heaven:* But the Lord will say to thee, Remember thou sinful Wretch, remember, there was a time when I called to thee, but thou wouldst not open the door of thy heart to me, and therefore now the door of Heaven shall not be opened to thy Soul: Thou didst not care for my company when time was, and therefore now *depart from me.*

Consider. 6. *Either you must entertain Christ into your hearts, or a worse Guest.* Certain it is, that this house will not stand empty long. Other houses may stand empty, but the heart will not; either you must entertain Christ or the World, and the truth is, this is the reason why many give such cold entertainment unto Christ, it is because they are so hot in pursuing of the World: The World maketh such a noise and lumber in their ears, that they cannot hear Christ knocking and calling upon them. Thus it was with *Laodicea*, they were so taken up with their goods and riches, that they had no leisure to attend unto what Christ said to them. Again, if Christ be *kept out*, the Devil will be *kept in* his possession still: You may see an awful Parable to this purpose, *Luke 11.24,25,26.* yea, let me tell you, that if you do not entertain Christ, you will lodge that in your hearts,
which

which is worse than any Devil in Hell, that is, sin, *Jer. 4. 14. O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?* So it will be, vain thoughts, proud thoughts, unclean thoughts, will lodge within thy heart, if Christ be not there: How lamentable is it, that if the World, or Satan, or Sin call, men can go presently; but if Christ call never so earnestly, they have no heart to stir. What? to shut Christ out, and receive his Enemies within! How will you be able to stand before the Lord, or your own Consciences another day for this?

Consider. 7. *That Christ is knocking at every door this day.* This Truth concerns every Soul amongst you. Look into Societies, Christ is knocking there: And I had like to have spoke a dreadful word, and to have said, that Christ hath given leave to Satan to knock there; What else is the meaning of those *doleful noises in the Temple*, even divisions and tearings in Churches? Christ knocked at the Church of *Laodicea*, so he hath at many Churches amongst us. Have not many Stars of late been removed, to shine in an higher Orb of Glory? Many precious Ministers have been smitten with sickness, yea, and with death too. Thus hath Christ knocked at our Churches doors, and so he hath at the door of the whole Countrey, by those blastings,

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ings, droughts, &c. that have been in former years; and that excessive rain which is at this day. Methinks I hear the Lord Jesus from Heaven, saying, O New-England, New-England, *be instructed, lest my Soul leave thee desolate.* And as for particular persons, they cannot say but that Christ hath been knocking and calling to them; You all have the Gospel preached to you, and therefore the Lord's calling upon you; and do you not meet with afflictions? and do you not receive many mercies? those are all knocks from the Lord of Heaven, I would you wist it. Art thou a prophane sinner? yet Christ knocks at thy door, and saith to thee, For sake thy sins, and come to me. Art thou an Hypocrite, a dead, formal, luke-warm Professor of Religion? yet Christ knocketh at thy door: Thus it was with some in *Laodicea*, they were *luke-warm*, yet did Christ stand and knock at their doors, that so (if possible) they might be roused out of their deadness and security. Art thou a true child of God? yet Christ knocketh at thy door, that so thou mayest give him further and better entertainment. There are some corners of thy heart that are not so full of Christ as they should be; therefore doth the Lord knock at thy door, that so every corner of thy Soul might be filled with the Spirit of the Son of God.

Quest.

Quest. But how shall we entertain Christ?

Ans. 1. Go to Christ, that he would open the door of your hearts: You cannot open them yourselves, then do not shut them, but go to Christ, and pray him to open them: He hath the key of every heart in his hand, *he openeth, and none can shut*, Rev. 3.7. pray to him then, that he would *put his hand in at the hole of the door*, Cant. 5.4. There is the hand of Christs Power, and of his Spirit, pray to him that these may open *thy shut-up heart*: When Christ knocketh, do you knock too, and *to him that knocketh, it shall be opened*, Matth. 7.7. Blessed shall be the man that heareth him, watching daily at his gates, waiting at the posts of his door, *Prov. 8.34.*

2. *Away with sin.* Christ will not come in, except sin go out; And therefore as ever you desire Christs company, away, away for ever with your vile lusts, and secret haunts after sin. Oh thou sinner, thou dost shut the King of Glory out of doors: As it is said, *Who is the King of Glory?* so I say, *Where is the King of Glory?* Is he in thy heart? No such thing, if sin be willingly entertained there; where ever he be, to be sure he is not in that heart of thine, if any unmortified lust abide there, *2 Cor. 6.15.*

3. *Entertain Christ wholly*; that is, 1. Let Christ have thy *whole heart*: You must not divide your hearts,

hearts, between Christ and other things, but let Christ have all: I am sure he is worthy of all, and he will have all or none. Some do, as it were, half open the door to Christ, as *Agrippa* did, when he was *almost persuaded to be a Christian*, Acts 26.28. But see that you receive Christ freely and fully. 2. Embrace *whole Christ*, Christ in his Person, as the only excellent and desirable one; and in all his Offices; as Prophet, to instruct you; Priest, to save you; King, to rule you. Some would have Christ to be a Saviour to them, but not a Lord over them; but if Christ come, he will be Lord in his own house: Let him then set up his Kingdom in thy heart; let him rule there by his Word and Spirit, then will he sup with thee, and thou with him.

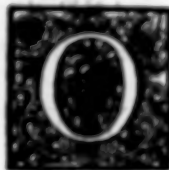
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There are some sinners so given
over by God, as that his holy
Spirit doth for ever cease
striving with them.

Gen. 6. 3.

*And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always
strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet
his days shall be an hundred and twenty
years.*



OF this Chapter there are two
parts: The first is concern-
ing Gods Determination to
destroy the old World with
a flood, because of the gene-
ral defection and wickedness
of the World. The second is
concerning *Noahs* preparing of an Ark, where-
in himself and his house were to be saved.

This Verse falls under the former of these, in
the which we have three things.

1. A Divine Commination, *The Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive.* The Hebrew word *רוּחַ* which is here used for *striving*, signifieth to *contend*, or to *dispute*, which is after the manner of men spoken concerning the Lord. For men sometimes have a contention, a *strife* and conflict in their Spirits, what they should do, or what course it is best for them to take. After this manner doth the Lord here speak, saying, I will not always have a *strife and conflict in my Spirit* about the children of men; I am now come to an issue about that matter, the thing is concluded.

2. We have the Reason of this Commination, *For that he also is flesh*; this is the Reason why the Lords Spirit will cease striving. *He is so*, that is, *man* is so, yea, even mankind; and consequently men of all sorts and conditions, even Professors of Religion as well as others, *the Sons of God*, as it is expressed in the former Verse: There were some that were only *the Sons of men*, that is, such as never minded God, nor did make any profession of his name, others did profess the fear and worship of God, and these are called his Sons. These words may have dependance on the last Verse of the fourth Chapter; where it is said, that *unto Seth there was born a Son*—then began men to call upon the name of the Lord. The Posterity of Cain were a prophane, irreligious Generation, but the

the Posterity of *Seth* were otherwise. Religion was for some time settled in *Seths* Family, in *their Generations*; but in process of time they did degenerate from the Faith and Religion of their Fathers, and became as bad as the *Cainites* themselves. *They were flesh*; that is, Carnal and Sensual. In the Scripture, the things of the Flesh, are set in opposition to *the things of the Spirit*, Rom. 8. 5. So here in the Text we may observe a secret opposition between *the Spirit and the Flesh*. The holy Spirit did move these sinners to Repentance, he stirred up their hearts to that which is good; but instead of following the motions of the holy Spirit, they did pursue only the Carnal, Sensual desires of their own fleshly and corrupt hearts; therefore doth the Lord threaten, that his Spirit should no more strive with them.

3. We have the Limitation of this threatening, *yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years*. The meaning of which is not, that the age of man after the flood should be such a space of time; for we read that many of the Patriarchs lived a longer space of time than that is: But the meaning of it may be, that a hundred and twenty years should be given to the World, and if in that space they would repent and return, and make their peace with God, well and good; but if not, his Spirit would utterly forsake them, and remediless ruine should befall them.

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The Doctrine which may be insisted upon from the words is this; viz.

That there are some sinners so given over by God, as that his holy Spirit doth for ever cease striving with them.

In the Doctrinal handling of this Point, two things may be attended: 1. To enquire how the holy Spirit doth strive with men. 2. To shew that he doth sometimes cease striving.

Quest. How doth the holy Spirit strive with men?

Ans. 1. There are *outward strivings* of the Spirit, e.g. God striveth with men in and by the Ministry of the Word; when he doth afford unto them the outward means of Grace, then he striveth with them, *Neh. 9:30. Thou testifiedst against them by thy Spirit in thy Prophets.* It is the holy Spirit that doth gift and send the Ministers of the Word, and accordingly doth breath in their Ministrations. Hence *Isaiah* saith, *Chap. 48:16. The Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me.* And therefore it was that *Stephen* said to the Jews, *You do always resist the holy Ghost: As your Fathers did, so do you, Acts 7:51. You resist the holy Ghost,* saith he: The Greek word ἀντιστηναι signifieth to resist after an hostile manner, even as Enemies do resist one another; they took up arms against Heaven:

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And how was that, but by rebelling against the voyce of God in his holy Prophets? The Jews were disobedient to the Commands of the holy Spirit speaking in the Prophets; and after that speaking in the Apostles, therefore Stephen tells them, that both they and their Fathers resisted the holy Ghost; therefore the holy Spirit doth strive with men, in and by the Ministry of the Word: And this is one thing intended in the Text, by the *strivings of the Spirit, which are here spoken of*. Hence the Apostle Peter saith, that the Spirit of Christ preached to the Spirits in Prison, which sometimes were disobedient in the days of Noah. Those words of Peter may well allude unto these words of Moses in my Text: Those sinners that lived before the Flood, whose Spirits are now in Prison; that is, whose Souls are now in Hell, shut up in the Dungeon of Eternal Darkness; there was a time when the Spirit of Christ did strive with them, namely, in the Ministry of Noah, that Preacher of Righteousness: So likewise by the Ministry of Enoch, and other godly Patriarchs.

Again, God *strives* outwardly by his *Providences*, as well as by his Word and Ordinances: As now he striveth by mercies. By bestowing these, doth the Lord seek to draw the hearts of men after himself, *Hos. 11. 4. I drew them with cords of a man*. God did seek and strive to draw them to himself, *by the cords of a man*,
I that

that is, by mercies and loving kindnesſes, for thoſe are the cords of a man, even the cords which men are taken and drawn with: And thus alſo did the Lord ſtrive with theſe ſinners of the old World which my Text ſpeaketh of, as you may ſee by that which Eliphaz ſpeaketh, *Job 22. 15. to 19. Haſt thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden, whoſe foundation was overthrowen with a flood, which ſaid unto God, depart from us, and what can the Almighty do to them, yet he filled their houſes with good things: So that thoſe wicked men that were overthrowen with the flood, yet God filled their houſes with good things, and thereby did he ſtrive with them, to ſee if kindneſs would break their hearts: The Lord alſo ſtriveth by outward Afflictions and Judgments upon men: Hence Afflictions are called Gods contendings, Job 10. 12. Job ſaith, he would ſay unto God, ſhew me wherefore thou contendſt with me. When the Lord afflicts a ſinner, he doth, as it were, commence a Suit in Law againſt him, he brings the Law to him, and ſheweth him, that he hath tranſgreſſed the Law: Thus doth he contend, thus doth he ſtrive.*

2. There are the *Inward ſtrivings* of Gods Spirit: All thoſe common operations of the Spirit, which ſinners, yea, Reprobate ſinners may be ſubject unto, are the ſecret bleſſed ſtrivings of the holy Ghoſt, with the Souls of men.

There

There is indeed an inward, powerful, effectual saving Operation of the Spirit upon the hearts of the Elect. I am not speaking of that, but of common works of the Spirit which sinners may partake of. To instance a little: 1. *There are some sinners, that the holy Spirit doth greatly enlighten their minds.* They have much knowledge in the things of God, they are made to understand what their duty is, even what they must do, that so they may please God, and be made happy for ever, *Micb. 6.8.* *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God:* They could not plead ignorance of the mind of God, the Lord had taken care that they should be instructed, both in duties of the first and second Table. Now all Conviction of duty, is from the Spirit, yea, all *Illumination* in Divine things is from him; therefore the holy Ghost is called, *the Spirit of Truth*, because all truth, and all discovery of truth is from him. If a man be but enlightened, so as to understand the Fundamental points in Religion, this is a great work of Gods Spirit: Hence the Apostle saith, *No man speaking by the Spirit of God, calls Jesus accursed; and that no man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the holy Ghost, 1 Cor. 12.3.* Because if a man be but convinced, that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah, even the Son of God, and Lord of all, this Conviction is however a com-

mon work of the holy Ghost upon the mind.

2. *The holy Ghost may cause terror to be in the Conscience of a sinner*: That then is a second way how the Spirit doth strive inwardly, it is he that doth *convince the world of sin*, John 16.8. All Conviction of sin and misery, is from the Spirit: Sometimes the holy Spirit cometh and reasons the case with a poor sinner, till at last he is silenced by the Evidence and Demonstration of the Spirit; from the which *Convincements*, secret, awful terrors do arise: Hence the Scripture speaks of *the Spirit of Bondage unto fear*, Rom. 8. 15. the holy Spirit convinceth a sinner that his present condition is miserable; so as that if he doth not get out of it, he must perish to all eternity: Hence dismal fears do arise in the Soul; the sinner cryeth out in the horror of his heart, I am a damned Wretch for ever, if death should find me in this estate. Now these terrible awakenings of Conscience, are the mighty strivings of the Spirit. An instance we have of this in *Felix*, Acts 24. 25. As *Paul reasoned of Righteousness, Temperance and Judgement*, *Felix trembled*. This *Felix* had been a very unrighteous and intemperate man, and did at that time live in uncleanness; and thence hearing *Paul* preach and prove, that there is a *Judgment to come*, wherein all such sinners shall be punished, he even trembled: Terror and trembling seized upon his guilty Conscience, at the sad thought of this. 3. *The holy Spirit may*

So given over by God, as that, &c. 117

so work upon the heart of a sinner, as to cause some good affections to work within him. Many have some faint, languid desires, some cold wishes and wouldings after Grace and life, that yet never did experience a saving work of the Spirit upon them. Now these sweet affections and workings of heart after that which is good, are from the holy Ghost. Thus we see in those Jews, John 5.35. Lord (say they) give us evermore of this bread: When they heard of the Bread of Life, even such Bread, that if a man eat, he shall never dye, presently their affections were stirred, and marvellously taken for a while, but it lasted not. So the stony-ground hearer, received the Word with joy, Mat. 13. 21. he was much affected with the sweet promises of the Gospel, yet this lasted not. In this manner it was with the false hearted Jews many a time, Hos. 6. 4. O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that goeth away: So that they had good affections, blessed dews, and influences of the Spirit, which would fall upon them at certain times; early and earnest workings of heart towards God, when the good fit was upon them, but all dyed away, and came to nothing at last: Yea, even Balaam himself had his good affections and good wishes when time was, Numb. 23. 10. Let me dye the death of the

righteous; let my last end be like his. Balaam in a good pang, could wish himself in the condition that righteous men are in: Many there are that have such Balaamitical flashes. 4. The holy Spirit may so far strive with a sinner, as to stir up good purposes and resolutions of Soul, to be, and to do better: As we see by them, Jer. 2-20. *Then saidst, I will not transgress, when, &c.* They purposed and promised, that they would no more commit such and such sins, yet when the Temptation came, they committed those very sins, which they had resolved against. Now good purposes are from the holy Spirit: As evil purposes are from Satan, so good purposes are from God; and usually it is so, that if God strive outwardly by his Word or Works, he doth also strive inwardly, by causing Convictions, Terrours, good Affections and Resolutions, &c. This we see in them, Psal. 78. 34. to 38. *When he slew them, then they sought him, they enquired early after God, nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and lyed unto him with their tongue; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his Covenant.* How common is it for sinners to desire, to purpose, and to promise better obedience, when sickness is upon them, when they see Death and Eternity before their eyes, when they see Hell gaping for them, and Devils ready to seize upon their guilty souls; then
Oh,

so given over by God, as that, &c. 119

Oh, if God will but spare them this once, it shall be seen how holy they will be; and yet if the Lord doth deliver them, they are as bad or worse than ever they were, forgetting that the vows of God are upon them.

We come therefore in the second place, to *show that the Spirit of God may cease striving with men.* This is expressed here in the Text, where God saith, *My Spirit shall not strive always*: Now we must not think, that this was a thing peculiar unto those times of the old World only. But God doth in the like case deal after the like manner with sinners in all ages of the World. The Dealings and Dispensations of God in ages of old, were to be Typical and Significative to succeeding Generations. Hence is that of the Apostle, 1 Cor. 10. 11. *All these things happened to them for [Types] (τύποι) and they were written for our Admonition, upon whom the ends of the World are come*: And therefore also the Psalmist speaks, as you find, Psal. 76. 2. *I will open my mouth in a Parable, I will utter dark sayings of old.* And yet if you observe the Psalmist, you shall find, that therein the Penman of it reciteth a plain History of Gods dealing with his people in the days of old, what mercies the Lord bestowed on them; and when they abused these mercies, what Judgements befel them, &c. — Why is this called, *a parable and dark sayings of old,*

even because there was more intended in those Records than a bare History; for they were to be for Types and Samples of Gods dealings towards men in after-Generations. Thus may we say concerning the matter before us.

But then the Question will be, *When is it that Gods Spirit doth cease striving?*

Ans. 1. When death cometh, then doth the holy Spirit eternally forsake a sinner. Indeed it's otherwise with the Saints, when they dye, their Souls go to have a full possession of the Spirit of Grace, whence in this life they are said to receive only an earnest, and the first-fruits of the Spirit: But as for a man that is only flesh, (as my Text speaks) when he dyeth, even *that which be hath is taken from him*, those common operations and strivings of the Spirit which he may partake of, will then leave his forlorn, forsaken Soul, Thus with the sinners my Text hath reference unto; it is said of them, *they were cut down cut of time*, Job. 22. 16. They might have lived many a day, and many a year, but death cut them down afore their time; and then did the Lord fulfil this threatning, that *his Spirit should not always strive with man*. So in the Parable concerning the unfruitful Fig-tree, it is said, *I will dig about it, and if it bear fruit, well; if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down*, Luke 13. 8, 9. If once the Lord send the Messenger of death, as it were, with

an Ax, to lay the sinner even with the ground, then there is no more *digging* about such an one, that is to say, no more strivings of the Lords Spirit with him.

2. *Sometimes the Spirit of God doth give over a sinner, even whilst in this life.* Some there are, that the Holy Spirit doth cease striving with them before, yea, long before death come upon them. This is an awful trembling Meditation, yet a truth needful to be insisted on; you shall therefore hear some instances for the Confirmation hereof: And what shall we say else concerning *Ishmael*? *Cast him out*, saith God, *Gal. 4. 30.* out with him, saith the Lord. Now the time when *Ishmael* was thus *marked out for a Cast-away*, was an hundred years and more before his death: When *Ishmael* was a child, God did mightily strive with him; he had many godly Instructions administred to him by his Father, and many checks of Conscience he must needs have, and so *strivings of the Spirit*: But when he grew up to years of discretion, being about twenty years of age, since he despised the means of Grace used with him, God would have the means taken from him; and by his being cast out of the Lords gracious presence, the holy Spirit was likewise taken from him. And so for *Esau*, *You know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the Blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place for Repentance, though he sought it carefully*

fully with tears, Hebr. 12. 17. Alas, he came too late. If *Esau* had come a little sooner, he had certainly had the Blessing; but since he came when it was too late, though he begged with tears in his eyes, that his Father would repent him of what was done in blessing *Jacob*, and pronounce the Blessing upon him, yet he could not obtain it. Now in this there was a Mystery; it was to signify, that if sinners do out-stand their day, then though they should seek the Blessings of Life, and Grace, and Happiness (all which were signified by the Blessings which *Esau* lost) it will be in vain for them. Again, (not to instance further) there was *Saul*, of whom it was said, *that the Spirit of the Lord departed from him, and an evil Spirit from the Lord troubled him*, 1 Sam. 16. 14, 15. The holy Spirit utterly forsook him, and he was possessed by the evil Spirit; and this was many years before *Saul's* death: And while he was yet living, he cried out, *God is departed from me*; and it was said to him, *The Lord is departed from thee, and become thine Enemy*, 1 Sam. 28. 15, 16.

But to speak a little more particularly, the truth hereof appears:

1. *In that the outward strivings of the Spirit may be removed*: So the Lord threatens in the eighth of *Amos*, that he would send a Famine in the Land, not a Famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the Word of the Lord,

Lord: There shall be a Famine of the Word, faith God, you shall be deprived of the means of Grace. And so we see it was; for *Acts 13. 46.* Paul and Barnabas said to the Jews, seeing you put the Word from you, *Lo, we return to the Gentiles*: So that the means of Grace may be taken from particular persons, as it was from Cain and Ishmael; or from a people, as it was taken from the *Jews*; But when God taketh away the means, his Spirit is wont to cease striving; yea, sometimes God ceaseth to strive with a people, or with particular persons, from that day that he taketh away their godly Minister from them: The time of Gods taking his leave of some, bears date from that very day when their faithful Minister was removed. Again, as to *Providential strivings*, they may cease before death: The Lord may take away his mercy from a sinner (as he did from *Saul*) or he may in Judgement resolve, never more to afflict him; it may come to that, that God will resolve not to lose one stroke more upon such *Rebellious ones*. It is therefore mentioned as one of the highest threatnings, *Hos. 4. 14.* *I will not punish your Daughters when they commit Whoredom, nor your Spouses when they commit Adultery*; and *vers. 17.* *Ephraim is joyned to Idols, let him alone*: Let him sin and prosper, no more means shall be used with him, to stop him in his course and career of Sin. Thus may

may the outward strivings of the Spirit be removed. And hence,

2. *The inward strivings of the Spirit may cease, even whilst the sinner with whom he hath been striving, is yet in this World : For 1. There are some sinners, that God doth by a Judicial aſt ſmite their Souls with penal blindneſs, Iſa. 44. 18. He hath ſhut their eyes, that they cannot ſee ; and their hearts, that they cannot underſtand : So Chap. 66. 4. I will chooſe their deluſions, ſaith the Lord : Some there are, that inſtead of a Spirit of Illumination, the Lord doth pour upon them a Spirit of Slumber, and of Deluſion ; yea, the ſame perſons that once were gloriously enlightned with the Truth, becauſe they have reſiſted thoſe ſtrivings of the Spirit, are ſmitten (as the Sodomites were) with Judicial blindneſs of mind : God hath ſent upon them the efficacy of Error, that they might believe a lye and be damned, 2 Theſſ. 2. 11, 12. once they had right apprehenſions concerning the way to life and happineſs ; but now the Spirit of Light and Truth hath ſo left them, as that they verily believe, that the way to Hell, is the way to Heaven ; and that damnable Heresies, are rare Truth. Hence is that, Rev. 2. 24. the depths of Satan as they ſpeak. They pretended that they had deep Myſteries, that was their ſpeech, and the thought of many that did embrace thoſe Doctrines ; but they were in truth no other but dark*

dark Satanical Delusions. 2. *There are some sinners, whom the Lord doth Judicially give up to hardness of heart:* As we read concerning Pharaoh, that God hardened his heart, Exod. 10. 27. That Plague of plagues, even an hard-heart: Some are given up unto it, yea so, as that the means of softning and awakening shall tend to harden them more; as that which melts the Wax, hardens the Clay. Wax you know, if it be brought to the Sun, or to the fire, it melts presently, but Clay is hardned thereby: So the Elect of God, the Sun of the Gospel doth melt their hearts, the fire of Affliction doth so too; but these things harden the hearts of Reprobates, as they did the Reprobate-heart of Pharaoh. After this manner doth the Lord deal with a sinner, when he giveth over striving with him, Providences, Ordinances, Mercies, Afflictions, Sermons, Sabbaths, Lectures, all shall make him more obdurate in sin. Hence the Scripture speaketh of some that have *their Conscience seared with an hot iron*, 1 Tim. 4. 2. There are some, when the time was, that they could not commit such a sin, nor live in the neglect of such a duty, but Conscience would be secretly stinging of them for it: But now they can live in those evils, and no terrours of the Almighty dismay them; instead of a *troubled, terrified*, they have now a *seared Conscience*: Thus it is with sinners that are utterly forsaken of the holy

holy Spirit, they have a *canterized* Conscience :
 As dead flesh feels nothing, so is it with Con-
 sciences of such sinners. 3. *There are some*
sinners ; whom the Lord doth give up to vile affe-
ctions. Time was when they had many good
 affections stirring in their hearts ; they could
 scarce hear a powerful Sermon preached, but
 they were affected with it, when as now they
 are no moved, than the stones they stand upon,
 or the seats they sit on ; nay, vile affections rule
 in them, and over them : You may read of some
 thus dreadfully given up by God, *Rom. 1. 21, 26.*
Because that when they knew God, they glorified
him not as God ; for this cause God gave them up
to vile affections. This was because they resist-
 ed Convictions and Strivings of the holy Spirit.
 So the sinners of the old World were given up
 to vile, dishonorable, shameful Lusts ; and a
 dreadful Scripture you have to this purpose, in
Psal. 81. vers. 11, 12. *But my people (saith God)*
would not hearken to my voice ; they regarded
 not the strivings of his Spirit : Well, but what
 followed upon it ? Shall I read it to you ? and
 will not your hearts tremble to hear it ? *So I*
gave them up to their own hearts lusts, and they
walked after their own compassions. Alas, this is
 the condition of some sinners, when God hath
 been striving long with them, but all in vain,
 he giveth them up to the power of Corruption,
 that they may be as bad as they will be. There-
 fore,

fore, 4. *There are some that are given up to desperation in sin: That instead of good purposes, they are desperately resolved to sin it out to the last, come on what will; come Life, come Death, come Salvation, come Damnation, sin they will they are resolved; like him that said, Si salvabor, salvabor; & si damnabor, damnabor: If I shall be saved, I shall be saved; and if I shall be damned, I shall be damned, and that's all I care.* The Prophet *Jeremy* speaketh of some such desperate Wretches, *Jer. 2. 35. Thou saidst there is no hope; no, but I have loved strangers, and after them I will go.* So saith a desperate sinner, after my evil courses *I will go.* There are some sinners, that though they know the courses which they take will most certainly bring their Souls to Hell at last, yet they are resolved to go on therein, *Ephes. 4. 19. Bring pass feeling, they work out all uncleanness with greediness.*

Use 1. We may see by this which hath been spoken, that *there are some sinners which out-stand and out-live their day of Grace.* Indeed the condition of all such is for ever lamentable, yet some such there are: for when Gods Spirit ceaseth striving, then is the day of Grace ended. Its true, the revealed day of Grace is, whilst the day of Life, and the means of Grace do continue; but the secret day of Grace is according to the strivings of the holy Spirit, or his
Deter-

Determination against the sinner, never more to strive with him. Now you have heard that God giveth over some sinners even whilst in this life; therefore there are that out-live their day: So did the wretched Jews, therefore Jesus Christ said of them, and he wept when he said it, *Oh that thou hadst known in this thy day, the things that do belong unto thy peace, but now are they hid from thine eyes*, Luke 19.44. Alas, they had a day, but they knew it not until their day was done: That was a sad word indeed, when Christ said to them, *Now are they hid from thy eyes*. You will say, but *who are they whose day is done?* The Answer unto that hath been in part given already, in shewing *when* it is that the Spirit ceaseth striving. Indeed we cannot say of this or that particular man (except he be one that hath committed the sin against the holy Ghost) that the holy Spirit will strive no more with him: For, *Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or who hath been his Counsellour?* Isa. 40.13. *Secret things belong to the Lord, and not to us*. Nevertheless, there are some that have sad cause to fear and tremble, lest thus it should be with them.

Quest. Who are they?

Ans. 1. They that have sinned away many and great Convictions of Conscience. Oh think of it! for there are some of you that have been under Convictions. It may be sometimes the

Word

Word hath awakened thy Conscience, when the truth hath been powerfully delivered, an arrow from Heaven hath darted into thy Soul, but thou hast sinned away these troubles : Or it may be some awful Providence hath awakened thee, sickness upon thy self, sudden death upon others, when one of thy Companions in sin stricken by sudden death, and carried away to his own place ; this did a little awaken thy secure Conscience for the present, but thou hast stifled these Convictions also ; Yea, and sometimes when God hath left thee to fall into some foul and fearful sin, thy Conscience hath been sorely troubled ; after that thou hast committed a *Soul-desolating sin*, thy Conscience hath been in a woful plight, even as if thou wert newly come out of Hell, yet thou hast sinned away these troubles also. I remember I have read a dismal story concerning a man that fell into the sin of Drunkenness : “ And first when he “ committed that sin, his Conscience was much “ troubled about it, but it was suggested to him, “ that if he would now in despite of those “ Convictions, commit the same sin again, “ he should never more be troubled for it : “ The poor Wretch did so, and found it lamentably true ; for after that, he could be “ drunk so oft as he would, and never troubled for it, but lived and dyed a miserable “ Sot : The Spirit of God forsook him utterly,

ly, because he sinned away Conviction's of Conscience.

2. *This sadly concerns those that are Revolters from Profession and Religion.* It is to be feared, that the holy Spirit will cease striving with them: This was *Saul's* case, *1 Sam. 15. 11.* *He is turned back from following me,* saith the Lord. Alas, when a man hath put his hand to Gods Plough, and then looketh back again, 'tis to be feared, that the Lord will reject him, as he rejected *Saul*. If men forsake God, no wonder if he forsake them; therefore that Prophet said, when the Spirit of God came upon him, *The Lord is with you, whilst you are with him; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you,* *2 Chron. 15. 2.* There have been lamentable instances of men that have turned away from their Profession of Religion, and have thereupon been given up by God to a Reprobate sense. I need not tell you of *Lucian, Porphyrie, Julian, &c.* And no marvel if it be thus, for Apostates are in the way to become guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost. If men begin to forsake the ways and Worship of God, it is to be feared they will hardly be kept free from that great Transgression; as is evident by the Apostles discourse, *Heb. 10. 25. &c.* Say not now, but we are no Apostates, we are all Christians: Well, but as there are Apostates outwardly, so there are some that are so inwardly, there are secret deep

heart-revolters from God. Are none of you back-sliders in heart? There was a time when you looked more diligently after your hearts than it is at this day. Oh tremble, lest the holy Spirit should forsake you. Besides, have not many of you sinned against Religious Education? It was so with these sinners whom my Text hath reference unto: They were the sons of God outwardly, but they became carnal and prophane like the World; therefore did the Lord say, My Spirit shall not always strive with them. They were the Posterity of such as feared the Lord, many of them, but they did degenerate: Oh consider of it, you that are of the rising, succeeding Generation in New-England. Take heed how you sin against your Religious Education, lest the Lord depart from you. Thou hast had a Father, or a Mother, that hath wept and prayed for the Conversion and Salvation of thy Soul full many a time; and yet thou remainest in thy natural, unconverted estate still: Remember Ishmael, and remember Esau, they had Parents that instructed them, and prayed for them, and set an holy example before them; but because they sinned against that godly Education which was graciously vouchsafed to them, therefore did the Lord reject, and his Spirit cease striving with them. Oh! hast thou slighted the godly Admonitions and Exhortations of thy Praying Parents? then thy heart hath

cause to tremble, lest the Spirit of the Lord should cease striving with thee.

3. *When a poor Soul is cast out of the prayers of Gods servants 'tis a sad sign that the Lord hath done with him.* When the Lord rejected Saul, he was not willing that Samuel should continue praying for him. So concerning the Jews, when God was resolved against them, he said to his Prophet, *Pray not thou for this people, for I will not hear thee, &c. Jer. 11.14.* The Lord by a secret wonderful Providence, is wont to move the hearts of his praying people, in their Supplications before him, according to what is in his own heart to do. The *Spirit of Prayer* is also the *Spirit of Prophecy*; hence from the Spirit of Prayer we may conjecture, how it is like to fare with sinners. Consider of it, thou hast a Friend, or a Relation perhaps, whose welfare thou hast been wont to pray for: Well, but now when thou art praying, it may be God doth cast it out of thy heart, that thou dost not remember to pray for such an one; or if out of Conscience to duty, thou dost pray for him, yet thy heart doth secretly misgive thee, that God will not answer thee: This now is a dreadful sign: Suppose a poor Creature to be never so vile, yet if thou canst pray and believe for him, there is hope; but if not, 'tis sad.

So given over by God, as that, &c. 133

4. *They that remain incorrigible under all the Dispensations of God: So as that neither good days nor bad days will change them, 'tis to be feared, that the Lord will cease striving with them. A General that doth besiege a City, after he hath tryed much means, and all in vain, he breaks up siege and departs: So doth the Lord of Host deal with sinners, when he hath been long beleaguering a mans Conscience with Conviction, but he resists all, he departs from such a sinner, and will not have one arrow more shot into his Conscience: And the truth is, that God is not wont to leave a sinner, until he hath first tryed all means with him, Mich. 6. 9. The Lords voyce cryeth to the City, and the man of Wisdom shall see thy name: Hear ye the Rod: First of all God seeth what his Word will do: His voyce cryeth, that is to say, the Trumpet of his Word giveth the Alarum; and if men be so wise as to hear that, it will be well for them. But if not, then he taketh the rod in hand, to see what that will do; and if neither Word, nor Rod, nor Providences, nor Ordinances, nor Mercies, nor Judgments will do, then God giveth a man over. Often so it is, that when men are incorrigible under Afflictions, the holy Spirit ceaseth striving with them, then doth the Lord say, Why should ye be stricken any more? Isa. 1. 9. Now (saith God) I see that your Disease is incurable, since the last Remedy will do*

you no good. As sometimes a Physician deals with a sick Patient, after he hath used much means in vain, he resolves to try one remedy more; and if that will not do, then he giveth him over for gone, and cometh no more at him: So doth God deal with the Souls of men, he useth much means with them, that they may be converted and healed, and Affliction is the last Remedy. I'll try one remedy more with such a sinner, saith God; I'll bring Afflictions upon him, and if that humble him not, then I'll give him over as *past hopes, and past help, past cure, and past care.*

Use 2. Let me speak to you in the words of the Apostle to the Jews, *Beware* (said he) *lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the Propheets, Acts 13.40.* So I say, *Beware* lest that come upon you which is spoken of here in my Text, even *beware lest Gods Spirit should cease striving with you.* And therefore,

1. *Take heed of quenching the Spirit: 1 Thess. 5.19.* Sure it is, you have had motions and strivings of the Spirit, yea, I am perswaded, that there is scarce a child of ten years old, but the holy Spirit hath been blessedly at work in his heart. Amongst those that are Religiously educated, it is ever wont to be so: Oh how hath the Word touched thy Soul to the quick; and then what affections? what resolutions? what terrors? what strivings of the Spirit? Now
if

if you love your Souls, *quench* not these strivings: The *motions* of the Spirit are an *Holy Fire*, take heed lest sin and temptation quench this fire, and therefore above all things beware of sins against Conscience: These will grieve and provoke the holy Spirit to depart from you. If you thus rebel against him, he will turn to be your Enemy. *Isa 63.10.* But,

2. *When God striveth, do you strive*: Follow the blow, and strike while the Iron is hot; as David did, *Psal. 27. 8.* *When thou saidst. Seek ye my face; my heart sail unto thee, Thy face Lord will I seek.* Dost thou not feel the secret whisperings of the Spirit saying to thee, Oh repent of such a sin, Oh practise such a duty, Oh go alone into some secret Corner, and there go to Prayer. Now when the holy Spirit thus moveth thy heart, follow the motion: And who can then tell, but that the Lord may be gracious to thee.

Here consider a few things:

Consider. 1. *That Gods Spirit will not always strive*: Oh let these words sound in thy ears *The Spirit of the Lord will not always strive.* Nay, it may be, he will *strive no longer*: Who knoweth, but that thy *day*, may at this hour be shutting upon thee? If thou dost not *now* resolve in good earnest to turn unto the Lord, it may be after this Sermon is ended, God will re-

olve against thee, that his Spirit shall never more strive with thee : Think sadly on that awful Scripture , Ezek. 24. 13. *Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee.* God hath been purging of thee, and thou was not purged ; that is to say, he hath been using means, and striving with thee , that so thy Soul might be converted, and yet thou remainest a Carnal Creature still : Fear lest God should say, *Thou shalt not be purged any more ;* thou shalt not have my Spirit to strive with thee any longer.

Consider. 2. *That if it should be so, that Gods Spirit should cease striving with thee, thou art then utterly undone for ever :* For when the Lord doth cease striving with men, he doth even swear in his wrath against them, *Psal. 95. 11. Unto whom I swear in my wrath, [if] they enter into my rest.* Saith the Lord, *[if] those sinners enter into rest, then let not me be accounted God any longer :* Oh thou sinful Creature, if the Lord should be provoked in his wrath to swear against thee, then as sure as God is God thou shalt be damned. A man may say a thing, and yet possibly go back , but if he swear, he will not go from his word : So the Lord speaking after the manner of men, is said to swear against some sinners, to shew his unalterable

So given over by God, as that, &c. 137

terable Determination against them, when he hath sworn, he will not repent, Psal. 110. 4. Alas, this day of Grace is past, if the holy Spirit should for ever cease striving with thee, and then no Prayers, nor Crys, nor Tears will avail for mercy. There is a Scripture, which methinks should strike cold to the heart of many an unconverted sinner that hears me this day: it is that in the first Chapter of the Proverbs, and the 28 Verse, *Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.* This was fulfilled upon the Jews, therefore did Christ say to them, *Ye shall seek me, and shall dye in your sins: whither I go you cannot come,* John 8. 21. Alas, they did not come till the door of Mercy was shut upon them. Had they sought God early in the morning, they might have found him, Prov. 8. 17, but it was early in the evening, that is to say, presently after the day of Grace was done that they sought, and then found him not: Oh remember Esau, he cryed with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said to his Father, *Bless me, even me also, O my Father,* Gen. 27. 34. But then it was too late, and therefore all crys were in vain. Remember also how it was with the Children of Israel, Deut. 1. 45. *Ye returned and wept before the Lord, but the Lord would not hearken to your voyce, nor give ear unto you.* They would not when they might, and

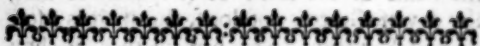
and therefore when they would, God said them pay. God commanded them to enter into *Canaan*, but they refused; afterwards they would gladly have done it, but then it was too late: Though they prayed and wept, yet they had sinned away the offer of Grace, and the Lord was then become *inexorable*. Thus if men come after the day of Grace is over, though they should weep Seas of tears of blood, all would be in vain; *for time is gone then*. "As
 "I remember I have some-where read of a wo-
 "man that had been guilty of Adultery, and it
 "pleased God to terrifie her Conscience, and
 "then she cryed out, *Oh time is gone!* and
 "many Ministers were sent for, to see if they
 "could apply any word of Comfort, but still
 "she cryed out, *Time is gone!* what tell you
 "me of Prayer, *my time is gone!* what tell
 "you me of Repentance and Pardon, *my time*
 "*is gone!* what tell you me of Faith in Christ,
 "and Salvation by him, *Oh my time is gone!*

Consider. 3. *That whilst the Spirit of God doth continue striving, there is a day of Grace vouchsafed to you.* Some poor Soul that trembleth at the Word of God, is ready to say, Alas, this is my doleful case, I fear my day is done. Say not so, if Gods Spirit be striving with thee, thy time is not gone: If thou hast now at last a serious purpose to return to God by Jesus Christ, be of good comfort; and in
 the

So given over by God, as that, &c. 139

the name of the Lord be it spoken to thee, thy day of Grace is not done, but there is Mercy and Salvation to be had for thee, if thou wilt upon gracious terms accept of it: Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of Salvation; therefore Improve your *now*, without any further put off. Take hold of the present opportunity, lest you never see such another. But of this more (if God permit) the next Lords day.

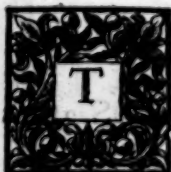
Seasons



Seasons of Grace (especially the present season) are carefully to be improved and redeemed.

Col. 4. 5.

Redeeming the time.



The usual method observed by the Apostle *Paul* in his Epistles, is, first to discourse Doctrinally, and then Practically; and so he doth in this Epistle to the *Colossians*. The two first Chapters are Doctrinal, and the two last are practical.

This Chapter then doth contain matter of Exhortation unto duty: 1. We have a special *Oeconomical* Precept, even a rule concerning Household-Government, (which in the former Chapter the Apostle had been speaking of, *vers. 1.* 2. He lays down sundry *general Moral Precepts* which concern Christians-

stians, in whatever state or relation they may stand in.

And here the Apostle doth exhort: 1. To the practice of that great duty of prayer, *ver. 2.* and in special that they would pray for him, *ver. 3, 4.* 2. He exhorts unto Christian Wisdom.

And that is the scope of this Verse, in which we have three things: 1. The duty exhorted unto, namely, wise Walking, *Walk in wisdom*, that is, cautelously and circumspectly, as it is expressed by the same Apostle, writing to the *Ephesians*, chap. 5. *ver. 16.* 2. We have the object of this duty, *towards them that are without*, that is Infidels, who are out of the Pale of the visible Church. The Church is compared to an House, hence they that are of the Church, are said to be *within*, that is, within doors, in respect of that sacred House of the Church; and them that do not belong to the visible Church, are described to be *without*, that is, they are not admitted within doors, but are kept out of the Temple.

3. Here is that which is the special work and evidence of this wisdom, namely, to *redeem the time*, which are the words, that by Gods help, we are to speak of.

Time is sometimes taken for space of time. Sometimes it is taken for *opportunity of time*; it is the same with *Season*. It may be taken both ways

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ways here, and especially in the latter sense; for the Greek word is not χρόνος, the usual word for time, but καιρός; which signifieth Season or Opportunity.

The *Doctrine* which the words do afford unto us is this.

That it is a great part of Christian Wisdom, timely to improve Opportunities and Seasons of Grace.

Intending to dispatch the point at this time, we shall in the Doctrinal prosecution of it, ly speak to two things, 1. What those seasons are which ought to be improved. 2. What is implied in redeeming seasons of Grace; or when a man may be said to redeem the time.

Qu. 1. *What are those seasons which ought to be improved?*

Ans. 1. *A mans life-time* in this World is to be improved: Thus Christ hath taught us by his own unerring example, John 9.4. *I must work while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work.* A mans life is but a season, even a day which shall have a night follow it; and therefore it is to be improved: Yea, and it is but a short season, 1 Cor. 7.30. *The time is short.* He that hath longest to live, yet hath but a short time to be in this world therefore James saith,
What

*What is your life? it is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away, chap. 4. vers. 14. and David saith, Behold thou hast made my days an handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee, Psal. 39. 5. A mans time in this World is as nothing before God, that is to say, as nothing in comparison of Eternity; therefore this time ought so much the more carefully and diligently to be improved; and it may be, a mans time is much shorter than himself doth think for. We read of one in the Gospel that was so foolish, as to dream of many years, when-as he had not so much as one day to live: He said he had goods for many, not only days, but years, when as before the next day, his Soul was taken from him, Luke 12. 20. Besides, when a mans life is once gone, it is irrecoverable, men must dye, and out of this World they shall go, and yet they dye but once, Heb. 9. 27. It is appointed for men [once] to dye: When once men are dead, the places that have known them, shall know them no more; the eyes that have seen them, shall see them no more; and the ears that have heard them, shall hear them no more. And thence if men do not improve their time whilst they are alive in the World, they lose their season for ever. When death is come, it is then too late to improve time; therefore Hezekiah saith, They that go down into the pit, cannot hope for thy truth, Isa. 38. 18. When a mans
body*

body is gone down into the pit of the grave, and his soul is gone down into the pit of Hell, he is past hope, and past help; he cannot hope for Gods mercy, he cannot hope for pardon of sin, he cannot hope for the salvation of his soul: Therefore life-time is to be improved.

2. *Times set apart for the solemn Worship of God, are carefully to be improved.* Christians ought to redeem time from their particular, to attend the duties of their general Calling; they ought not to serve themselves only, but they must look to it, that they allow themselves time also for the service of God. It is true, that some are so much in the outward performance of religious duties, as that they do thereby intrench upon their particular callings, spending more time in outward Worship, than any Rule of God doth require, or allow them to do: So the *Heretical Enchites* of old, &c. But the greatest part of men err on the other hand, in allowing too little time, rather than too much, for the performance of sacred duties. But it is a great point of Christian wisdom, to order things aright about this matter; so as that neither a mans particular calling may intrench upon his general calling as a Christian, nor yet his general upon the particular. I say, that time must be allowed for the Worship of God. A man may not neglect the Worship of God, either in his Family, or in his Closet, or in the publick Assemblies

Assemblies of his people, out of pretence that he wants time; rather let a man deny himself time to sleep, nay time to eat and drink, than not to take time to pray, and to serve God. Moreover, when a man is worshipping God in any duty, such a season is very heedfully to be improved, else the Lords name will be taken in vain; and men instead of serving and pleasing God, will provoke him to displeasure by an heedless serving of him. And in special, the Lords-Day is a season of Grace which ought to be improved, that's the day appointed to solemnize the Name and Worship of God in Christ amongst men, to the end of the World, *Psal. 118. 24. This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoyce in it:* The day of Christs Resurrection, which was upon the first-day of the week, even this very day is to be observed, in Commemoration of the Resurrection and Redemption of Christ: *This is the day*, which above others, ought to be prized and improved: It is a Market-day for the Soul, and therefore to be redeemed. Besides, if men take hold of opportunities, to attend there where God is worshipped, they come where the Lord himself cometh, and thence may hope for a blessing: In which respect such seasons should earnestly be laid hold on. You read in the Fifth of *John*, concerning an impotent man that lay waiting at the Pools of *Bethesda*, and

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Christ finding him there, he was healed: Had not the man layen at the Pools of *Betbedsa*, Christ had not found him there; and had not Christ found him there, he had not been healed. Now the Ordinances of God are the Pools of *Betbedsa*; if Christ find men there, who knoweth but that Grace and Life may be given into their souls; but if they be not there, they keep themselves out of the way of a blessing.

3. *The time of prosperity* is a season which ought to be well improved: Thus you find *David* calling upon the Princes of *Israel*, 1 Chron. 22. 11, 18, 19. *Is not the Lord your God with you? hath he not given you rest on every side? now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God.* It is (saith he) a prosperous season with you, and therefore now be looking after God, and the things of God; and indeed this is the most commodious season. Husbandmen you know will take the season whilst the Sun shineth, and the weather is favourable, to be gathering in the fruits of the earth: So if men would be laying in for Eternity, if they would be laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold of Eternal life, it will be their wisdom to improve the time of prosperity in order thereunto. As now, if God give unto a man a time of health and strength, let him improve it, in order to making his peace with God, and promoting

moting the Eternal welfare of his own Soul. Thus the Holy Ghost by *Solomon* doth exhort, *Ecclef. 12. 1. Remember thy Creator*; Ay, but when? When old age cometh, or when sickness and death cometh, but never before that; so the Carnal heart saith, and so the Devil saith, but the Lord teacheth otherwise; therefore it is added, *In the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.* The evil days of sickness, or the troublesome years of old age will come upon you; but see that you remember to make your peace with God, before those days come. So again, if the Lord bestow upon a man an estate, and cause him to prosper in the World in that respect, let him improve this, to honour God with his substance, and wisely make unto himself Friends in Heaven, with the unrighteous Mammon of this World. And truly if men do neglect such seasons, they have no reason to expect other, but that God will deprive them of them, and alter the tenor of his gracious Dispensations towards them: As it was said to *Hester, who knoweth whether thou art come to the Kingdom for such a time as this? if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, thou and thy Fathers house shall be destroyed, Esh. 4. 14.* So I say, who knoweth but that the Lord hath given men health and wealth, and prospered them here and there in

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the World, that so they might improve these mercies and good things, to the honour of him that gave them, and for their own Spiritual and Eternal comfort : If therefore they altogether neglect this season, let them look that God will blast their estates, and smite them with sickness, yea, and that a worse thing shall befall them. Nevertheless,

4. *The time of Adversity* is a season which ought likewise to be improved : Hence this Apostle saith, *Redeem the time, because the days are evil*, Ephes. 5. 16. The times were then as they are now. It was in the Apostles days a time of persecution and suffering to the people of God, therefore he calls that time an *evil day* : Now in this season, time was to be redeemed ; the world the times are, the better Christians ought to be ; if the times be very bad, Christians ought to be very good : Hence also is that 2 Tim. 4. 2. *Preach the Word, be instant in season; and out of season.* In season, is in time of prosperity ; out of season is a time of Adversity, when a man cannot preach, nor hear a Sermon, without incurring danger ; yet such times must be improved to be doing and receiving good. If the times be bad, then the Lord threatens men, to deprive them of seasons of Grace, and in that respect there is the more need to improve them. And this is a special thing intended by the Apostle in the Text,
Walk

Walk in wisdom redeeming the time : Shew your wisdom (saith he) by making the best of a bad Market. As wise Merchants, if the times be bad, will be more wary; if Trading be dead and low, they will be loth to venture upon a bad bargain, or to let slip the advantage of a good bargain. Thus should men deal as to their souls; as for seasons of grace, they should see that they husband them well, especially when the Lord is threatening to take them away.

5. *Times of being in company and converse with others,* ought to be improved. Such times should be improved for the receiving of Spiritual good: It is said, *He that walks with the wise, shall be wise,* Prov. 13. 20. If a man doth fall into the company of such as are godly and wise, he hath now an opportunity put into his hands to get wisdom; he might propound many profitable Questions, which he is not able to resolve himself, but one that God hath given a greater measure of wisdom and understanding unto, could soon resolve him, had he an heart to improve such an opportunity. Again, such times should be improved for doing good, that is, by holy Conference and Exhortations unto the thing that good is; as we see in the Context, *Redeem the time,* saith the Apostle; and then the very next words are, *Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt; that ye may know how ye ought to answer*

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every man, Col.4.6. So that's one way of improving time aright, even by gracious and saving discourses. The neglect of this is the great sin of many Professors: Alas, how is it, as if *holy Conference* were banished out of the World? Christians meet together, and much discourse passeth about this or the other matter, but it may be not one edifying word all the while: But what saith the Scripture? *Exhort one another daily*, Heb.3.13. As you have opportunity of daily converse, you should take occasion to exhort and call upon one another, and say how is it with you as to Spirituals? Have you got assurance yet? do you grow in grace? How is it with your Soul, doth that prosper?

6. *Solitary times are also to be improved*: I say, not only times of being in Company, but times of being alone, are to be improved. Such seasons should be made use of for Prayer, Meditation, and Self-Examination, &c. We read concerning *Nathaniel*, that Christ said to him, *When thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee*; John 1.48. Though no mortal eye beheld him, yet the Son of God that hath eyes like a flame of fire, looked upon him there: Jesus Christ who is God as well as man, saw *Nathaniel* when he was alone under the fig-tree: Indeed it is not said what *Nathaniel* was doing there; but it is very probable, that he was praying or meditating, or about some such holy design, that
Christ

Christ should take such special notice of him. So concerning *Isaac*, we read that he went out to *meditate in the field*, Gen. 24. 63. He retired himself into a solitary place, that so he might with the more freedom and conveniency practise that much neglected, and yet profitable duty of Meditation. So for *Jacob*, Gen. 32. 24. *Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day*. He spent a good part of the night in secret prayer, none being there present but Christ and he. Yea, Christ himself hath taught us this, by his own blessed example, *Matth. 14. 23. He went up into a Mountain apart to pray, and when evening was come, he was there alone*. And the truth is, that a time of privacy is the fittest season for holy Converse and Communion with God, because then a man may freely and fully open his whole heart to God. Men have their special corruptions, which it is not fit the World should hear of; yea, all that are *Christians indeed*, have their special and sore Temptations that do molest them; as for loose, formal Professors, they may go on smoothly and easily; but as for such as have taken up not only the form, but the power of godliness, they meet with many rubs and difficulties, and strong assaults from the great Enemy of Salvation: Now secret places are the fittest to complain to the Lord in about these temptations; therefore

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times of privacy, may and must be taken hold on by Christians for such an end.

7. *The time wherein Gods Spirit doth strive with men is to be improved.* There are seasons wherein the holy Spirit is blessedly at work with the heart ; now these are seasons which ought carefully to be improved. If men be to set sail, they must take the opportunity when the wind serveth : So if they would be setting sail towards Heaven, they must observe the gales of the Spirit ; they must lay hold on the opportunity, wherein the blessed breathings of the Spirit are afforded to them: These should be improved in order to Repentance, lest haply the Spirit of the Lord do forsake a man, and give him up to the hardness of his own heart for ever ; as you have lately heard that with some sinners it is so. And these seasons ought to be improved for prayer, *Ephes. 6.18. Pray always* (ἐν παντί καί ποτε) *in every season*, as the Greek phrase is, *watching thereunto*, &c. You must watch when the Spirit of God stirs you up to prayer, and then upon your knees, sometimes the Lord by his Spirit secretly moveth unto prayer, yea sometimes he puts the heart into a praying frame : Now that's a season of Grace which may not be neglected, without great danger to a mans Soul.

Lastly, *The present time is that which should carefully be improved* : So *Eccles. 12.1. Remember*

her [now] *thy Creator.* Men, especially young men, when they are called upon to be mindful of God, and the things of God, and the great concernments of their Souls, are apt to put it off till *to morrow*, or sometime *hereafter*; but the holy Ghost saith, *now*. Mind this matter without any further delays: Do not think to put off God with *Excuses*, or with *To morrow*, but the first thing you do, make sure of an interest in him, *a Cor. 6.2.* *Behold, now is the accepted time: Behold, now is the day of Salvation.* Satan saith, and a Self-deceiving heart saith, *To morrow, to morrow*; but the Lord saith, *Now, now*: Yea, there is a *double Behold* added to it, *Behold, behold, Now, now* is the time for you to look after your Salvation, if ever you desire to be saved. But of this more in the Application of the point.

We proceed therefore to the second thing, namely, to shew what is implied in redeeming seasons of Grace, or, *When a man may be said to redeem the time?*

For Answer to that, 1. Herein is implied, *A heart to receive and do all the good that may be.* Except there be an heart to receive Spiritual good when it is offered, a man cannot be said to redeem time; as *Solomon* complains, *Prov. 17.16.* *Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it.* Sometimes it is so, that there is a precious Ser-

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mon preached at a mans door; if he would come and hear, who knoweth how much good might be done to his Soul: But he cometh not; and yet hath no sufficient Reason to excuse himself, only *be bath no heart to it*; therefore he is not worthy to be accounted a *Time-Redeemer*. So again, there must be a heart to *do good*. As the Apostle exhorts, *Gal. 6. 10. As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially to them who are of the household of Faith*: When a man doth seriously and conscienciously think with himself, how may I improve my time and talent most to the honour of God and of good men, and comfort of my own Soul, in the great Day, and *doth accordingly*; such an one doth *redeem the time*. Though a man should be providentially disappointed as to actual performance, yet if indeed he hath *an heart* to lay hold on opportunities of receiving or doing Spiritual good, he is a *Time-Redeemer*.

2. Herein is implied, *Wisdom to discern of Times and Seasons*. As it is said of the Children of *Issachar*, that they *had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do*, 1 Chro. 12. 32. There is no redeeming the time without wisdom; therefore the Apostle saith, *Walk wisely, redeeming the time*: And Solomon saith, *A wise mans heart discerneth both time and judgement*, Eccles. 8. 5. As in Civil affairs, except a man know when the Market is, how should he take

take hold of the opportunity while the Market is up, to buy and furnish himself with what he stands in need of; So if a man hath not wisdom to discern of times and seasons, he will never improve them aright; hence Christ complaineth of the Jews, *How is it that you do not discern this time*, Luke 12. 56. and again, chap. 19. 43. 44. *If thou hadst known in this day, the things that belong to thy peace. Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.* They did not improve their day of Grace; therefore are said, *not to know their time.*

3. Herein is implied, *A willingness to part with those things that would hinder from receiving or doing good*: The Greek word (*ἐξαρπαζόμενοι*) which is here used, signifieth *to buy*. Now in buying there is always a parting with something; as the Gospel speaketh of the wise Merchant, that *he parted with all that he had for the Pearl of great price*: So it is in buying or redeeming time, there must be a parting with those things that would make a man lose his time. The Original word is a Metaphor taken from wise Merchants or Tradesmen, that prefer their profit above their ease and pleasure: So if a man would *redeem time*, he must *sorgo* those things which would hinder him from glorifying God; or that would keep him from promoting the eternal Salvation of his own Soul; yea, and he must be content to put himself to some

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some trouble and disadvantage, that he may promote the Spiritual and Eternal Welfare of other mens Souls; and this is here intended by the Apostle, *Walk in wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time*; as if he had said, take hold of opportunities to gain Infidels to Christ, though it should be to your own outward disadvantage; See that you do what you can to gain men to Christ, though you your selves should lose by it, as to Temporal concerns.

4. When a man doth endeavour to make up *his former losses and mispence of time by a diligent improvement of the present season*, then he may be said to redeem time; when a man hath lived and spent his time unthriftilly, but now he endeavours by double diligence to redeem, and, as it were, to *buy back again* the time that's past and lost; when he is made sensible, that he hath done little for God in former times, and therefore endeavours to live much unto, and do much service for God in Christ now, then he *redeems time*. As the Children of *Israel* in the last year of their being in the Wilderness, dispatched more way than in forty years before: So when a man doth more for God now in one year, than he hath done twenty or forty years: We may say that, that man *Redeemeth time*.

Come

Come we to the Use of the point :

Use 1. *Here is matter of sad reproof unto those that do mispend precious time.* You shall have some that say, They do such a thing to pass away time, and such a thing is very good to pass away time. O lamentable! as if men had more precious time than they knew what in the World to do with, or how to bestow it! And alas, how many are there, that spend their time exceeding unprofitably; it may be in going from house to house, and there hearing or telling tales: Oh if that time which is spent in vain jangling, were spent in secret Communion with God, and in faithful endeavours to promote the welfare of the Souls of men, how comfortable, and how glorious would it be for such a man at the great Day! How would he then rejoyce that ever he lived upon the face of the earth! Alas, there be that spend their time even in sinful practices, for the which no time ought to be allowed. There is one practice which I hear much precious time is spent in, that I must needs bear my Testimony against: That which I mean, is those unlawful Games of Cards and Dice: Those Games have always been condemned by the Servants of God, as things that are in themselves unlawful. I use not to tell you much what Fathers say, else I might say, that Cyprian, Clemens Alexandri-

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nam, Ambrose, Chrysostome, Austin, &c. have of old condemned such practices. Yea, in the days of Christian Emperors, there have been severe Laws against such *Gamesters*. In *Justinian's* time there was a Law, not only that no man should play at Cards and Dice, but that no men should so much as be present to see others play: Nay, even Heathens by the Light of Nature, have condemned such practices. The Philosopher speaketh against it in his *Morals*: An Heathen Poet sharply inveighs against it; and *Cicero* in one of his *Orationes* objects against *Antonius*, that he was a *Dice-player*, and one that entertained such *Gamesters* in his house. And amongst *Reformers*, these kind of Games have ever been disapproved. *Papish Authors* usually plead for the lawfulness of them, but *Protestants* generally write against them. And it must needs be acknowledged by all mens Consciences, that it is unlawful to spend so much time in any *Recreations*, as is usually spent in attending those *games* by those that use them. There is a secret Curse of God goeth along with them: Hence it is, that if persons be once given to this practice, they can know no bounds, but spend day and night therein. Besides, there is therein a breach of the third Commandment, in as much as these Games are not without *Lottery*, though there may be something of Skill in them, yet there is something of *Lottery*. Now a Lot is a Sacred thing, where-
in

in the name of God is much concerned: In all Lots there is an appeal to Providence to decide the matter in controversy. It is said concerning a Lot, *that the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord*, Pro. 16. 33. Hence it is that Lots may not be used in trivial matters: Search the Scriptures, and you shall never find that Lots were used in trivial, but only in weighty momentous matters, which might be prayed over. Now no man, whose Conscience is not profligate, dare pray over his Cards and Dice. Where we may not make a prayer in word, we may not do it in act, or in signs to signify it, as 'tis in a Lot. And it is a good Rule, *That practice which a man dare not pray over, let him evermore suspect it for an unlawful practice.* Moreover, as these Games are usually practised, there is in them a breach of the eighth Commandment, that is, when men play for money. If a man get anothers goods at under price, this is Injustice, it is Theft, and a Transgression of the Rule of Righteousness: How much more to take from another his Estate for nothing at all in the lieu thereof, but only play. Every Lawful way of getting is sanctified by prayer, which you heard but now that these Games are not; and therefore the estate got thereby is unlawful gain. And in this respect also, the Name and Providence of God is abused therein: For when God hath by his Providence possessed a man of a just estate,

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for him now to go and make a question, whether this Estate shall be his or another mans, and then decide the Controversie by *Dice*, is unworthily to abuse the good Providence of God. Again, this practice is of evil report, and therefore ought not to be amongst Christians: The Scripture bids us *follow the things that are of good report*, Phil. 4. 8. which sheweth, that things of evil report in the World ought to be avoided, by those that profess the name of Christ: Now so are these Games. You heard how Heathens by the Light of Nature condemned them, and shall Christians take up such practices? The People of God are offended and grieved at such things, and therefore I beseech those of you that have been guilty here, for the Lords sake to reform this evil. Oh it is a sad thing that such a practice should prevail in *New-England* that once was, and ever ought to be, a *Land of Uprightness*. Yet I hear, that *the rising Generation*, are many of them, tainted with this vice, not only in this great Town, but in many places in the Countrey: This is a sad and a sure sign of Degeneracy in the *rising Generation*: For twenty years ago, there was no such practice known amongst Children born and bred in *New-England*: And therefore that now it should be so common, doth testifie against young ones, that they are *degenerate Plants*. I have not spoken this out of the least prejudice against any
that

that hath been guilty this way; only that to this evil might be repented of, or however that I might be a witness for God this day in this particular.

Use 2. Exhortation, Ob labour to improve present seasons of Grace: And for that end consider seriously a few things;

1. *That the present time is the only time which men can say is theirs.* As for the time past, that's none of yours, that's gone never to be seen again, Psal. 90. 9. *We spend our days as a tale that is told.* Why? A tale that is told, can never be untold again; so the time that is past, will never be here again. A man may lose other things, and find them again; he may lose his estate, and have it again, or he may lose his name, and recover it again; but if he lose his time, he shall never have it again: It is impossible that yesterday should be here again, or that the time past should be present, and not past: As I remember, I have read of a poor woman, that being in great distress of Conscience, many Ministers came to speak with her, and they could have nothing from her, only she looked upon them with a ghastly countenance, and cried, *Call time again! Call time again!* except you can bring back time again, you can do nothing for me: This was the doleful effect of neglecting the present season when time was. On think what they in Hell would give to have those

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hours, which they have lost in sin and vanity ! They would give ten thousand thousand Worlds if they had it, that they might again have a space to repent in ; yea, that they might have but one hour to pray and seek the face of God, with any hopes of mercy, but it cannot be. And for *time to come*, you cannot say, that that is yours, for that is altogether uncertain : A man cannot live a moment beyond the time appointed. One miserably cryed out upon a death-bed, *A World of wealth, for an inch of time, a World of wealth for an inch of time.* And another when dying, said, *If I had ten thousand Worlds, I would give them all, that I might live one day longer.* Remember the Scripture, which saith, *Boast not thy self of to morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth,* Prov. 27.1. Men have not, as *Hezekiah* had, a promise of life for fifteen years. It may be thou hast not fifteen days, nay, not fifteen hours to live : If thou wert sure thou shouldst live but one week, how wouldst thou redeem the time ? Yet it may be thou shalt not live one day, and darest thou then mispend thy time.

Consider. 2. *The exceeding danger which is, in neglecting the present season.* This is marvellous dangerous, because there is no promise for to morrow, but only for to day, Heb. 3.7. [*To day*] if you will hear his voice ; and again, Verse 14. *Exhort one another [daily] while*

while it is called [to day] and Verse 15. [To day] if you hear his voyce, barden not your hearts. Thus doth the Lord say, *To day, To day, To day*; but you will no where find in all the Book of God, any promise, that, To morrow if you will hear his voyce, it shall go well with you. The Devil and a man's own treacherous heart may promise for to morrow, but God doth not so. It may be either *now or never*; all times will not serve for Soul-saving purposes. Hence is that, *Isa. 55. 6. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.* There is then a time wherein God may be found, and a time wherein he will not be found: If you delay and put off God for the present, it may be he will not be found for the future; Oh therefore make thy peace with God *quickly*, lest it be too late, *Matth. 5. 25.* Know this for certain, that the longer you delay your Repentance, the harder work you will find of it; the longer any man liveth in sin, the harder it is for him to turn from sin, *Jer. 13. 23. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? then may you do good, that are accustomed to do evil.* This very delusion, that men will repent hereafter, and therefore that they may venture to neglect the *present season*, hath been the Eternal ruine of millions of Souls. Oh Sirs, if some of you could but speak with your old Companions in sin, that are dead and gone to their own place,

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they would tell you dismal stories to this purpose; they would say to you, *Ab Fools that we were, to neglect the present season, out of a vain Confidence, that hereafter we would repent and turn to God*: This hath brought us into the place of Torment, from whence there is no Redemption.

Consider. 3. *That the Lord will surely call you to an account one day for your time.* You shall all appear before the Son of God one day, and give an account how you have lived and spent your time in this World: Men must give an account how they have improved *Talents*, especially this great and precious *Talent of Time*. The Lord keeps an exact account how many years, days, hours, is allowed to every man in this World, and will reckon with men for all one day. As I remember it is storied of *Ignatius*, that if he did hear the Clock strike, he would say, *There is another hour gone which I must answer for.* Oh if men did think sadly of this, how would they improve their time? Did they know how great a sin it is to mispend so much as one hour, would they spend it may be whole days in vanity?

Consider. 4. *That you have lost much precious time already*; and therefore it is high time to look about you, and to consider well how you may improve the present season, 1 Pet. 4. 3. *The time past of our life may suffice us, so have wrought*

wrought the will of the Gentiles: So the time past which hath been mispent is enough, and too much to be lost. Alas, men spend the greatest part of their time either in doing nothing, or in doing amiss: How much time is there spent in excessive sleep, or in needless recreations, or in unprofitable discourses? nay, how much time is spent in sin? All the days of a mans irregnacy, are days of vanity: All that time (which as to the most of you hath been the greatest part of your lives) hath been utterly lost. Hence *Paul* speaks of his being born out of due time, 1 Cor. 15. 8. Because afore his Conversion, his life was a death rather than a life, he lost all that time, even as if he had not been born into the World. An old man once said, when dying, *I have lived but seven years*; because he was converted but seven years before his death, and before that he made account he was as a man that did not live, as a man that had no time or being in the World.

Contid. 5. *Your time in this World is but short*; therefore improve it, it's pity to lose any part of a short time. Christ lived not much above two and thirty years, therefore did he go up and down doing good, and was wonderfully careful to improve his time to the best advantage: Who knoweth how soon thy Soul may launch forth into the Ocean of Eternity? Thy time will quickly be gone; hence *Jab* saith,

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Chap.9. ver.25,26. *My days are swifter than a Post, they flee away, they are passed away as the swift Ships, as the Eagle that hasteth to the prey.* When men ride Post you know, they go swiftly, but a Ship in the Sea hath a swifter motion, and flying is swifter than that, and an Eagle is amongst the swiftest of Birds, and the motion of an Eagle when hastning to the prey, is more swift than ordinary: All this is said, to shew how fast a mans time doth spend away. If a man hath much work to do, and but little time to do it in, he had need to bestir himself. Suppose the Sun to be almost set, and yet much work must of necessity be done e're the Sun be down: How needful is it to improve that little time? So 'tis here, every man hath much work of absolute necessity to be done, many duties to perform, many corruptions to subdue, many sins to repent of; and if all this be not done before Sun set, a man's undone for ever, and therefore improve his time he must.

Consider. 6. *Eternity depends upon the well improving of a moment.* According to the Seed-time in this Life, such will the Harvest be in the World to come for ever, Gal.6.7,8. Oh! *Eternity, Eternity, Eternity*, is a solemn and awakening Meditation. I am persuaded, if you would when you come home, think seriously one quarter of an hour about Eternity, it would by the blessing of God tend to awaken you

you to improve your short time in this World. Remember then and often think on it, that thou must shortly go either into *Everlasting weal*, or else into *Everlasting woe*; according as time in this World hath been improved or neglected. Within a few days thy Immortal Soul shall be either in *Eternal Joy*, or else in *Eternal Torment*; that after thou hast been therein, as many millions of Ages, as there are Stars in Heaven; as many millions of Ages, as there are piles of Grass upon the Earth; as many millions of Ages, as there are sands upon the Sea shore, thou shalt then be no nearer unto an end of that condition, than thou wast at the first moment when thou didst enter into it. Oh I do beseech you for Gods sake, for Christs sake, and for your Immortal Souls sake, that you would think of this seriously, though it be but one quarter of an hour together.

Quest. What shall we do that we may improve time?

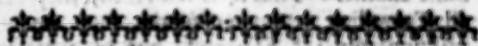
Ans. I'll mention but one Rule, and that is this, *Live every day, as if it were your last day.* Let me preach, as if I were never to preach more; and do you hear, as if you were never to hear more: Do nothing, say nothing, think nothing, but what you would be willing to do, if you were to dye the next day.

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If you were sure, that as soon as this Sermon is ended, your naked Souls should appear before God the Judge of all, how then would you hear? Verily if these truths were realized to the hearts of men, they would labour to redeem their time, yea, they would watch and pray,

Now blessed is that *Servant, whom the Lord at his coming shall find so doing.*

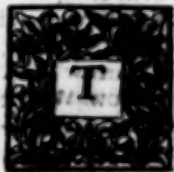
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The number of those that find
the way to Life, being com-
pared with those that walk in
the way to Destruction, is
but a small number.

Matth. 7. 14.

Few there be that find it.



These words are part of that
large and blessed Sermon
which Christ preached on
the Mount; the whole Ser-
mon is full of Heavenly mis-
tery. Amongst other things,
we have the Parable con-
cerning the two Gates, and the two Ways;
namely, the *Wide and the Strait Gate*, and the
Broad and Narrow Way, in this, and in the
foregoing Verse; where our Saviour doth com-
pare all the men in the World, to a company of
Travellers, that are walking some one way, and
some

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some another: Thus it is with men, they are all Travelling to another World, they are all walking towards Eternity, but in contrary ways: Some are going towards Eternal life; others are going towards Eternal death: Wherefore Christs scope in these Verses, is, to perswade men to enter in at the Strait Gate, and to walk in the Narrow way.

Divers Arguments are used to press this Exhortation, both with reference unto the Broad, and also with reference unto the Narrow Way: As for the Broad Way, one Argument there mentioned is, that it is a common thing to walk therein, *Many there are that walk therein*; and therefore there is so much more need to be careful about the matter. Again, because of the miserable end which that way doth bring unto, *It leads unto destruction*: That's the end and issue of walking in the Broad Way; therefore we should be sure to walk in the Narrow Way. And then in reference to the Narrow Way it self, there are divers *Argumentative Considerations* mentioned, 1. Because it ends in life, *Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life*. 2. Because *there be few that find it*: Which are the words, by the Lords help, to be spoken to. *That find it*, i. e. That find the way to life. Which speech must not be understood simply and absolutely: For the number of saved ones, absolutely considered, is a very great and vast number;

ber; they are said to be a great multitude which no man can number, Revel. 7.9. There are many hundreds, many thousands; yea, millions of them, even a numberless number, like the stars of Heaven. But this is to be understood comparatively; the number of those that walk in the way to life is but small, compared with the other number, namely, in respect of those that shall miss of Eternal life. The Doctrine therefore which may be insisted on from the words is this.

Doctr. That the number of those that walk in the way which leads to Eternal life, being compared with those that are in the way to Destruction, is but a very small number.

In the Doctrinal prosecution of this Point, three things may be attended: 1. To shew what is that Way of Life which is here spoken of. 2. How it doth appear, that but few shall find Eternal Life. 3. Whence it cometh to pass, that so few do find Eternal life.

Quest. 1. What is the way to life?

Answer. In general, That way which God hath prescribed unto men to walk in, that so they might obtain Eternal life, Prov. 10.17. He is in the way of life who keeps instruction. The instruction there spoken of, is Divine instruction: The meaning

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meaning is, that if a man doth observe the Word of God, then he is in the way of life. This way is laid out by Rule, and that Rule is none other but the Word of Truth: Hence it is called *the Way of God*, and *the way of the Lord*; that is to say, the way which the Lord hath appointed men to walk in, that so they may be saved, particularly:

1. In this way Repentance and sound Conversion unto God is implied: For men by Nature are out of the right way, Rom. 3. 12. The Apostle there shewing what is the estate of all men by Nature saith, *They are all gone out of the way*, and vers. 17. *The way of peace have they not known*. That way which leads to everlasting peace and happiness, men by Nature are estranged from it: Therefore Repentance is necessary. And if there be a true and sound Repentance, Life will follow. Hence it is called, *Repentance unto Life*, Acts 11. 18. and, *Repentance unto Salvation*, 2 Cor. 7. 10. because Repentance will bring unto Life, and unto Salvation.

2. In the way which is here spoken of, Christ and Faith in him is implied: when it is said, *Enter in at the strait gate*, the meaning is, make sure of an interest in Christ: therefore Christ himself hath said, *I am the door*, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, John 10. 9. Christ is that strait Door, that whosoever enters

in

in thereat, shall be saved : That strait Gate, that if any enter in thereat, he shall live : So when it is said, *Walk in the narrow way*, the same thing is intended thereby, namely, the obtaining of an interest in Christ by Faith unfeigned in his name : Therefore also Christ hath said, *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, Joh. 14:6. Never any man did obtain Eternal life, but it was in this way, even in a way of believing on Christ ; and never any man did miss of Eternal life, that did indeed walk in the way of Faith. 1 John 5. 12. *He that hath the Son, hath life ; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.* Whoso findeth Christ, finds the way to Eternal life.

3. *The way of new and holy obedience* unto God in Christ, is the way of life : Therefore the Scripture speaks of the *holy way*, Isa. 35:8. *And a way shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness, the unclean shall not pass over it.* Now this Holiness is the way to life, Pro. 12:28. *In the way of Righteousness is life, and in the path-way thereof is no death.* If a man doth walk in righteous paths, and keep in righteous holy ways, no Eternal death shall take hold of him, but this way will lead him unto life. This which hath been expressed, is the only way to life and glory ; this way hath ever been the same in all ages of the World. Hence it is called, *The way Everlasting*, Psal. 139:24. *Lead me in the*

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the way Everlasting, that is to say, in the way which the Saints in all ages have and shall walk in, towards life and happiness. Hence also it is called, the *Good old way*, Jer 6.16. *Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the way, and see and ask for the old path, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls, &c.* I say, the way of Repentance, Faith and Holiness, always hath been, and is, and ever shall be the way unto life.

We come then unto the second thing, that is, to enquire, *How it doth appear, that the number of those that find the way to life, is comparatively but a small number?*

Now for Answer unto that Enquiry, several things may be mentioned, which are Evidences and clear Demonstrations; of the truth of this point.

1. *Because those that do enjoy the Word and outward means of Grace, are comparatively but few.* God hath appointed the means and the end to go together; therefore where he intends that end of Eternal life, he is wont to bestow the means which himself hath appointed, in order to the attainment of that end: Hence is that, 1 Tim. 2.4. *God will have all men* (that is to say, men of all sorts, as the context doth manifest) *to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*; those two go together, even Salvation, and the knowledge of the Truth.
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The Apostle saith, that the Jews would have hindred them from *preaching* to the Gentiles, *that they might be saved*, 1 Thess. 2. 16. which plainly declares, that without Preaching (according to ordinary Dispensation) there is no Salvation. This is certain, that there is no Salvation without Christ, Acts 4. 12. It was *Austin's* saying, that *he that doth think that any may be saved without Christ, it may well be questioned whether that man shall himself be saved or no*. And there is no Salvation by Christ, without Faith in him; *This is life Eternal to know* (that is, to believe on) *Jesus Christ*, John 17. 3. And there is no faith ordinarily, but it is wrought by the Word preached. What God may do for Infants, or for deaf persons, or the like, is another question; but we speak concerning the Lords ordinary course of Dispensation: Hence is that, Tit. 1. 1. *according to the faith of Gods Elect, and acknowledging the Truth*. Ordinarily there is no faith, but it is by means of the knowledge of the truth of the Gospel: The Apostle speaketh fully to this purpose, Rom. 10. 14, 15. *How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a Preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?* and then in vers. 17. he speaketh Argumentatively, *So then* (saith he) *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*. It's true, that men may by the light of Nature know

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know many things about God; as that he is, and that there is but one God, one Eternal glorious Being, who ought to be served, &c. But they cannot know Christ by the light of Nature. God is known as a *Creator* by the light of Nature, but not as a *Redeemer*. There is no faith, without the knowledge of Christ as a *Mediator*, which Mystery is not discovered, but by *Supernatural* light of the Gospel; but they that have the knowledge of the Scriptures, are comparatively but few. In the Ages of the Old Testament, there was but that one only Nation of *Israel* that enjoyed the outward means of Grace, *Psal. 147. 19, 20. He sheweth his Word to Jacob, his Statutes and his Judgments to Israel: He hath not dealt so with any Nation; and as for his Judgments, they have not known them.* It's true, that there were some few particular persons that had the knowledge of God, who were not *Israelites*, but no other Nation; therefore it is not said, *He hath not dealt so with any person*, but with any *People*, or *Nation*: Hence the Lord speaking unto his people *Israel*, saith, *You only have I known of all the Families of the earth, Amos 3. 2.* And while it was thus, the way of Salvation was to be found amongst that people only: Therefore Christ said to the woman of *Samaritis*, *Salvation is of the Jews, Joh. 4. 22.* Because then a man must be a Jew, in respect of his Religion and Profession a Jew, or else

else he could not be saved; wherefore also the Scripture giveth us to understand, that as for those miserable Nations which peopled the earth in those dark days, which were before the Sun of Righteousness did arise upon the World, they perished in their ignorance, *Acts 17. 30.* *The times of this ignorance God winked at:* The meaning is not, that God winked at their sins in these days of ignorance, but at their persons: He *overlooked* (as the Greek word *ὑπερὶ* properly signifieth) them. The Lord had no saving-regard to them, and to their times, but suffered them to walk in their own ways, even in the Broad Way which leadeth unto destruction. Now although in these New-Testament times there are many Nations that have the Gospel, yet but few in comparison of those that are destitute thereof: Therefore as for the way to Eternal Life, *Few there be that find it.*

2. This is farther evident, because *the Elect of God are but few.* Eternal life runs parallel with the time of Election, *Rom. 8. 29, 30.* All, and only those shall be saved, that belong to the Election of Grace, *2 Thess. 2. 13.* But the Elect are but few in number. Indeed the Elect, considered *in themselves*, without comparing them with the Reprobate World, are many (as before was hinted at) which may be one Reason why the Elect are expressed by that term of *the World*, *1 John 2. 2.* *Christ is the Propitiation for our sins;*

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and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole World: The *Elect* there are called, the *whole World*; the main Reason of that Expression may be, because the *Elect* do consist in a great part of *Gentiles*, who are called the *World* oft in Scripture, in opposition to the *Jews*, formerly the only people of God. Christ (saith the Apostle) is a Propitiation, not only for our sins, who are *Jews*, but for the sins of the *Gentiles* also, whom he calls the *World*. But another Reason of the Expression may be, because of the multitudinous number of the *Elect* absolutely considered; yet compare them with the *non-Elect*, and then they are but very few. The word *Election* doth import this; for to elect is to chuse or pick a few out of a greater number, *John* 15. 19. Hence the *Elect* are called a *Remnant*, *Rom.* 11. 15. and a *little flock*, *Luke* 12. 32. The Greek is τὸ μικρὸν ποίμνιον, where there are two Diminutives signifying, a little, little flock, that is a very little flock. The *Israelitish Nation* was a Type of the *Elect* of God; hence the Apostle calleth the *Elect* an *Holy Nation*, *1 Pet.* 2. 9. alluding to the *Israelitish Nation*, which typified the *Elect*: Thence also the *Elect* are called by that name of *Israel*, *Gal.* 6. 16. *Rev.* 7. 4. Now that *Nation* when God first chose them, were a very small Nation, compared with other Nations in the *World*, *Deut.* 7. 7. *The Lord did not set his love upon you,*
nor

nor chuse you, because you were more in number than any people, for you were the smallest of all people. Therefore the Elect are but few; yea, they are but few, compared with those that are outwardly called, *Matth. 22. 14. Many are called, but few are chosen:* So that amongst called ones, that is, in respect of the outward call of the Gospel, there are but few chosen, but few of them that belong to the Election of Grace. You heard in the *first Arguments*, that there are but few outwardly called, compared with the rest of the World, yet but few elected amongst such called ones: Therefore as for the way to life, *Few there be that find it.*

3. This truth is also manifest, in that *those things which are necessary in order unto life, are rarely attained.* To instance, Repentance is necessary in order unto life (as but now was intimated) therefore is that *Ezek. 18. ult. Turn and live ye;* so that there is no living without Turning: But true Repentance is a rare thing; so rare, as that in the Prophet *Jeremies* time, there was upon the matter none at all, *Chap. 8. vers. 6. I hearkned and heard, but no man repented of his wickedness; every one turned to his course, &c.* No man (saith he) repented him; that is to say, they were very few, even so few, that they seemed none at all. As *Solomon* speaketh concerning Repentance for that sin of Uncleanness, that he found but one man of a thou-

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said that repented of it, Eccles. 7. 28. And in another place he saith, None that go into her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life, Pro. 2. 19. So it is measurably true concerning Repentance for other sins. Again, you heard that faith in Christ is requisite in order unto Eternal life: The sum of the whole Gospel is contained in those few words, Mark 16. 16. He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned. But true faith is a rare thing; therefore is that Isa. 53. 1. Who hath believed our report? So that even amongst those unto whom the report of the Gospel cometh, there are but few that believe in truth: To presume is common, but to believe is rare. You have heard also, that Holiness is required in order unto life: That Text is plain, and the words are peremptory, Heb. 12. 14. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord: No man, be he high or low, shall see the Lord of life; and therefore no man shall inherit Eternal life, without Holiness. But holy men and women are rarely found, 1 John 5. 19. The Apostle there saith, that the whole World lieth in wickedness: Yea, even amongst those Pretenders unto Holiness, there are but few that have the thing in reality, Isa. 65. 5. They say, Stand by thy self, come not near to me, I am holier than thou: These are a smoke in my nose; a fire that burneth all the day. Mark you, they
were

were persons that did pretend to extraordinary Holiness (as Superstitious persons and Hypocrites are wont to do) yet the Lord tells them, that his anger should smoke and burn against them everlastingly: Therefore as for the way to life, *Few there be that find it.*

But the truth hereof will be further evident, by speaking to the third thing propounded for the opening of the point; that is, *Whence it cometh to pass that so few do walk in the way of life?* We shall only mention two Reasons of the Doctrine.

Reas. 1. Because the way of Life doth not suit with Nature: There must be a Supernatural light to direct the Soul into this way, 1 Cor. 2.14. *The natural man receiveth not the things of God, neither can he know them.* And after a man doth see this way, there must be a Supernatural work of the Spirit to cause him to venture on in it; yea, it is not only above nature, but against corrupt nature. The way of Mortification, is the way to Heaven: Now that's a way to which men are naturally as averse unto, as they are to cut off their right-hand, or to pluck out a right eye, *Matth. 5.29.* If this be so, no wonder that so few are found walking in this narrow way. To see men swimming down the stream is no strange thing, for that's natural; but to see them swimming against the stream, would be wonderful. Thus it is here, when

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men walk in the way to life, they swim against the stream: Hence we need not marvel if there be but few such. And this is further manifest, because,

Reas. 2. *The way to life is an hard way*, even a way full of Afflictions and Temptations on the right hand and on the left; hence Christ calls it a *narrow way*, or an *afflicted way*, as the word intimateth, *πρὸς λιμνὴν* cometh from *σπένω*, to *afflict*. A *compressed way*, as some render it: Things that are *dilated by pressure*, are made *narrow*; so is this way which you hear of, *The way to the Kingdom of God is through many tribulations*, Acts 14. 22. It's like the way out of *Egypt* to *Canaan*, there was a dismal desolate Wilderness in the way, which was a Land of drought, and of pits, and of fiery flying Serpents, &c. So is the way to the heavenly *Canaan* no less terrible. Thence there are but few that find it.

Thus you see the Truth cleared and proved from Scripture.

But some one will say, *Doth not God delight more in glorifying his Grace, then in manifesting the dreadfulnes of his Justice? How then can there more be damned than saved?*

Ans. True, but Grace is glorified more in the life of a few, than Justice in the Destruction of those many millions of millions that shall perish. The reason is, Because all men have

have deserved death, but none hath deserved life: And as for those that shall be saved, because they are but few, therefore Grace is the more magnified towards them, and will be glorified in them, and by them to all Eternity.

We come then to apply this truth.

Use 1. By way of *Confutation*: This Doctrine lets us see the erroneouſness of ſundry false Opinions which ſome men have taken up: As,

1. Their Opinion is from hence convinced of error, *who have thought that the Gentiles were ſaved by their Philoſophy and Morality*, though they had nothing but the light of Nature to inſtruct them. If that were ſo, Chriſt would never have ſaid concerning the way to life, *few there be that find it*. How can that be, if very Heathens by the dark light of nature find it? One of the Ancients therefore ſaid well, *That ſome have endeavoured to prove Plato a Chriſtian, till they have thereby proved themſelves to be little better than Heathen*. There is a Book extant with that Title, *de Salute Ariſtotelis*, concerning the Salvation of Ariſtotele. And another hath written a Book, *de Animabus Paganorum*, endeavouring to prove, that the Souls of ſome that dyed Pagans, are in a ſtate of bliſs. But though I cenſure not any of the godly, learned Ancients; or amongſt the Reformers, that have been blemiſh'd with this error, yet it

will be found certain another day, That *Philosophy*, without *Theology*; light of Nature, without the light of Scripture, will never bring the Soul to Christ, or into that way which leads to Eternal life. There are too many bad *Christians*, but there are no good *Heathens*. Take the best of the Gentiles, even those that wrote most for Virtue, and try them by the Touch-stone of Gods Word, and it will be found true, that there never was the least real Scripture-virtue in any of them: They would make a shew of Love, and Patience, and other Vertues; but what they had, was no more like the Scripture-grace of Love or Patience, than the Sun which is painted on the wall, is like to the Sun which moveth in the Firmament: Their Magnanimity, if tryed by Scripture, will be found no better than that odious and accursed sin of Pride. What shall we say, that *Paul* doth expressly and by name condemn that for a Vice, which *Aristotle* cryeth up for a Vertue: So you find, *Ephes.* 5. 4. the Apostle there doth condemn *Jesting*, the Greek word is *εὐλαλία*, which is one of *Aristotles* Vertues. Yet it must be acknowledged, that the Morality of the Gentiles was not altogether lost to them; for (as some have well observed) they thereby procured Temporal good to themselves, and present ease of Conscience, yea, and less misery in Hell than otherwise they must have suffered: But as to
Eternal

Eternal Life, all these things without Christ, were of no value.

2. This Doctrine also confuteth *the Error of Universal Redemption*. Certainly if Christ had dyed for all, he would never himself affirm, that but few shall find the way to Eternal Life. If Christ have dyed to save men, and yet they fall short of Salvation, then must his blood be shed in vain, as not being able to accomplish the end intended by him, which thing may not be imagined, *Gal. 2.21*. It's a sure Proposition, that *the Redemption of Christ, and the Application of this Redemption, are of equal extent*; but my Text teacheth us, that the *Application* of this Redemption reacheth *only* to those that are comparatively but *a few*: And shall we think that Christ would dye for those whom he would not so much as pray for: He would not pray for the Reprobate World, *John 17.9*. Surely they that are not interested in Christs *Intercession*, are not interested in his *Oblation*. To dye for another, is an evidence of the *greatest love* that can be, *John 15.13*. How harsh and horrid is it to affirm, that Christ loved *Judas* as much as he did *Peter*? yet so it must be, if he dyed for the one, as much as for the other: Wherefore the Scripture plainly intimateth, that Christ dyed only for the Elect of God: Thus some understand that place, *Heb.2.16*. He took not on him *the nature of Angels*: So the words *ἡ φύσις τῶν Ἀγγέλων*

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ἄγγελοι are rendred; but they may be read, *He taketh not hold of the Angels.* Saith the Apostle, Christ saw the Reprobate Angels falling into the pit of Destruction, but he did not take hold on them to recover and save them: No, *but the seed of Abraham he taketh hold of:* He doth not say, the seed of Adam, but the seed of Abraham, thereby intimating, that Christ did not come to redeem all men whatsoever; but the Elect of God, who are noted by that Expression of *the seed of Abraham.*

3. This confuteth their Error, *who maintain that a man may be saved in any Religion, if he be but civil, and live up to his Religion.* Such a Principle as this there is in the *Turkish Alcoran*; and it were well if some Christians did not say after *Mahomet* in this particular. But sure it is, that there is but one true Religion, and many false ones: And as they that are of no Religion, are out of the way to life, so are they that are of a false one. The Jewish Religion will not bring to life, *John 8.24. You shall dye in your sins, if you believe not that I am he, you shall dye in your sins:* So that they that believe not that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah, that our Christ is the Son of God, and Saviour of the World, shall not live, but dye for ever in their sins. This you know is the case of the Jews at this day. And as for the *Mahometan Religion,*

Religion, there's no Salvation in that: Therefore you find *Rev. 9.* that that Religion is come out of the Bottomless Pit: It is said, *vers. 11.* *They had a King over them, which is the Angel of the Bottomless Pit, whose name in the Hebrew Tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek Tongue Apollyon,* that signifieth a Destroyer: So then, those of that Religion are in the way to destruction. And as for the Popish Religion, it is also Heretical and Damnable. *Mr. Perkins* long since wrote a Book, wherein he proveth, *that a Papist living up to the Principles of his Religion, cannot go beyond a Reprobate:* And doth not the Apostle, when he speaketh concerning the Apostasie of the *Man of sin*, teach, that those that are deceived therewith, *shall perish, and that they all shall be damned,* who are given up of God to believe the Lyes and Delusions of Antichrist, *2 Thess. 2. 10, 11, 12.* Now that by the *Man of sin*, the *Popedom* is intended, is past all doubt, to those that are willing to be convinced of the truth; because the description which the Apostle doth there give of Antichrist, doth agree wholly and only to the *Popedom*, even in all the particulars of it. Again, doth not *Jobu* shew, that all *Lyers* shall be excluded the heavenly *Jerusalem*, *Rev. 21. 27.* Who are the *Lyers* there meant? Sure especially Popish Idolatrous and false Worshipers, whose Religion is a great lye. But we shall touch a little farther upon
this

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this anon. In a word, whosoever doth maintain any Heresie against the true Religion of Christ, or *Faith delivered to the Saints*, cannot be saved; therefore *Heresies* are said to be *damnable*, 2 Pet. 2. 1.

Use 2. *If there be but few that shall find the way to life, then there must needs be many that walk in the way to destruction.* Hence is that, Joel 3. 14. *Multitudes, multitudes*, saith the Prophet: Where are they? In the way to life? Nay, *but in the valley of Division*, in the place of Destruction, there are *multitudes, multitudes*: And Christ here saith, that *broad is the way, and wide is the gate which leadeth unto destruction, and [Many] there be that go in thereat.* And the Apostle saith, that there are *many* whose end is destruction, Phil. 3. 19. It will appear that it is so indeed, if we consider who they be that are in the way to destruction: And this is true concerning those many Heathen Nations which are in the World; who remain altogether ignorant of the true God in Christ, and strangers to the Profession of the true Religion, Psal. 9. 17. *The wicked, and all the Nations that forget God shall be turned into Hell.* And again, Psal. 79. 6. *Pour out thy wrath upon the Heathen that have not known thee, and upon the Kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.* And this is true, not only concerning such as do wilfully refuse and reject the means of Light and Life,

as the Jews did ; but also concerning those that never heard of the *way of Salvation* ; and are in that respect, as some speak, under *invincible ignorance*, yet they are in a perishing condition : Witness that Scripture, *Prov. 29. 18. Where there is no vision the people perish* ; and that *Matth. 4. 16.* where it is said of such as are destitute of the means of Grace, that they *sit in darkness, and in the Region of the shadow of death* : which also might be one reason why Christ told the Jews, that they should be *cast out into utter darkness*, *Matth. 8. 12.* because they should be deprived of the means of Grace, and so, as it were, damned above ground, and in the Suburbs of Hell, while they were yet living upon the Earth : Witness also that Scripture, *2 Thess. 1. 8.* which saith, *that Christ shall be revealed from Heaven, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.* So that not only those that obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that is to say, such as reject the Gospel by positive Unbelief, as the Jews did : But likewise those that *know not God*, even such as are under *negative Unbelief*, and thence under *invincible Ignorance*, must suffer vengeance ; though not for their Unbelief, yet for their Transgressions of the Law.

Now of this sort are the greatest part of the Inhabitants of the Earth by far. *Christendom* (as

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(as it is called) even the whole Christian World, is but a little spot, compared with the rest of the World. Some have observed, that if all the Inhabitants of the World should be divided into one and thirty parts, nineteen of the one and thirty are Idolaters, and seven parts are Mahometans and Jews, and only five parts of one and thirty that is so much as in name *Christian*. However, sure it is, that the Christian World is little, compared with the Pagan World: And yet amongst those that call themselves Christian, the greatest part are in the broad way, which leadeth to destruction; for the greatest part of these are indeed Antichristian: Let us set aside the *Grecians*, *Jacobites* and *Nestorians* (who are said to comprehend the greatest part of them that are known by the name *Christians*) as being in sundry points Heretical; and look into *Europe*, *America*, and how few shall we find there that are Christians indeed? For in many Places and Nations there are more Papists than Protestants, albeit as to our Nation, through the mercy of God, it be not so. But you heard it proved that Popery is damnable Heresie. No doubt but that there may be some simple Souls amongst Papists, who having the knowledge of the Fundamental points in Religion, and living according to the light they have thereby received, though they may ignorantly think well of the Church of *Rome*, God may shew

shew them mercy : But I speak of wilful Papists, and of such as live up to the Principles of that Religion, which is inconsistent with living according to the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, now these must needs perish. I would be loth to be the Author of an harsh Censure, yet I am willing to speak after the Angel of God : See then *Revel. 14. 9, 10.* *The third Angel followed them, saying with a loud voyce, If any man worship the Beast and his Image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the Wine of the Wrath of God which is poured out without mixture into the Cup of his Indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy Angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. A very dreadful Scripture; and the persons concerned in it are Papists. Now then if the third Angel say thus, why should not we declare the like, that so we may be amongst the number of the Angels whom the Holy Ghost there speaketh of? Besides, Idolaters cannot be saved, 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10. Revel. 21. 8.* But if there be any Idolaters in the World, the Papists are such, when they worship graven Images, and pray to Saints, and to *Gods that cannot save them* : How then should they be saved? Again, their Doctrine of Justification by Works is a Fundamental errour, as *Paul* testifieth in his Epistles, especially in his Epistle to the *Romans* (which was not without mystery,

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mystery, that the Apostle writing to the Romans, should so much insist upon that subject) besides many other Heresies by them maintained. I remember our great *Whitaker* saith, *If one Heresie be destructive, what then are so many as those which the Papists defend. If they (saith he) shall be saved, then we must needs be damned; but if we be in the way of Salvation, then they are in that way to destruction?* Moreover, it is an ancient and true Maxim, that *out of the Church there is no Salvation to be had*: But Papists do not belong to the visible Church of Christ. Therefore you read, *Rev. 11.1.* that the *Temple is measured*; and *vers. 2.* it is said, *But the Court which is without the Temple, leave out and measure it not, for it is given unto the Gentiles, &c.* So that Papists are *without the Temple*, that is to say, they do not belong to the Church of God; and thence also they are there called *Gentiles*, because those *Apostate Christians* are in the same condition with the *Heathen*, Persecuting, Idolatrous World; whose God is not Christ, but Satan and Antichrist. Yet if we come neerer home, and look amongst *Protestants* and *Professors* of the true Religion; Alas, we shall find many there that are walking in the broad way to destruction. It is said concerning the Church of *Sardis*, *Thou hast a few names*, *Rev. 3.4.* Some of good judgement that look upon the Epistles of Christ to the seven Churches in *Asia*, to be a Parable

Parable or Propheſie concerning the ſeven-fold ſtate of the viſible Church, from Chriſts firſt unto his laſt coming, conceive that our times fall under the fifth Interval, or the *Sardian* condition of the Church. *Sardis* might be a Type of Proteſtant Churches; now therein are but a few names: Amongſt Proteſtants there are but *few that live*, or that are acquainted with the life and power of Godlineſs; but *many* that are dead, though they have a name to live: For this is true concerning all prophane ones, Drunkards, Swearers, Lyars, Unclean Perſons, and ſuch like, they ſhall not inherit Eternal Life. Alſo this is true concerning thoſe that are only Civil and Moral men, but are ſtrangers ſtill to *regenerating Grace*: Yea, and thus muſt we ſay of all Heretical Perſons; and not only ſo, but of all that are in a ſtate of Hypocriſie, men that make a great ſhew of Religion, but there is ſome unmortified Luſt that they love and live in, they may have a name to live, but they are dead. Now if all theſe be put together, even all that are Prophane, or only Civil Moralized perſons, and all Hereticks in judgment, and all Hypocrites in heart, what a vaſt number then are in the way to Deſtruction. In a word, there are *many* that ſhall periſh even amongſt hearers of the Word; witneſs the Parable of the Sower, where we are told of four ſorts of ground, that is, of four ſorts of hearers, and yet but one of

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them

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them good, yea, *many* shall perish amongst seekers after Life: For Truth himself hath spoken it, *Many shall seek, and shall not be able to enter in at the strait gate*, Luke 13. 24. yea, *many* shall perish, even amongst those that have instructed others in the way to life: So did Christ say towards the close of this very Sermon wherein my Text is, *Matth. 7. 23. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out Devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works; and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

Use 3. If these things be so: Oh, how then should that solemn Exhortation of the Apostle take place in all our hearts, *Phil. 2. 12. Work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling?* Since there are but few saved, and many perish; Oh how should we seek after Life and Salvation with fear and trembling? Let me spread before you a few *Awakening and Encouraging Considerations*, and so conclude.

Consider. 1. *That many are miserably deceived about this matter.* Men may, and many do think themselves in the way to life, when-as they are passing to destruction; *they think themselves something, when they are nothing*, Gal. 6. 3. Therefore Solomon saith, *There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are*
the

the ways of death, Prov. 14. 12. Doubtless if you could speak with those in Hell, and ask them why they were such fools as to walk in that way which did lead them into Eternal flames, the greatest part of those forlorn Souls would answer, We little thought it! we hoped we had been in a good way, we never imagined, that when once our Souls were out of our bodies, that then they must be in this place of Torment; I say, many are thus deceived, and no marvel: for,

*Consider. 2. A man may bid fair, and go far towards Heaven, and yet at last miss of that narrow way which leadeth unto life. Alas Sirs, alas! what have many of you to say for to prove your Title to Eternal Life, which you pretend unto, but what Hypocrites and Reprobates may say the same? Will you say, I am a constant hearer of the Word, I go to hear good Ministers preach, therefore I am in the way to life? But what saith the Scripture? *James 1. 22. Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own Souls.* Many cheat their own Souls with this Delusion, because they hear the Word, they think they shall be saved: But thou mayest be a constant hearer upon Lords-days, and upon Lecture-days, and yet not be in the way to Eternal Life, *Few there be that find it.* Will you say, but the Word hath had some effect upon my Soul, I am in some measure changed*

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 and reformed by it? Remember that Scripture,
 2 Pet. 2:20, which tells you, that *men may escape*
the pollutions of the World, through the knowledge
of Christ; that is, by the power of the Gospel,
 and yet be such, as it had been better for them
 not to have known *the way of Righteousness:*
 Therefore thou may be in some sort reformed,
 and yet not in the way to Eternal Life: *Few*
there be that find it! Will you say, but I pra-
 ctise good duties, I Pray, and give Alms, and
 Fast, and all this in secret: This is well done,
 yet no more than what an Hypocrite may do,
 Luke 18.2. The Pharisee there saith, *I fast twice*
in the week, I give tythes of all that I possess, &c.
 These could not be publick, but they were se-
 cret: fasts: Therefore thou mayest practise se-
 cret duties, and yet not be in the way to Eter-
 nal life: *Few there be that find it!* Will you
 say, but Gods servants, and those that are able
 to judge, think well of me, and have received
 me into their Fellowship: No, as that I am a mem-
 ber of a pure Church of Christ: But might not
 Judas, and Ananias and Saphira, and Simon
 Magus have said all this? What did you of
 the foolish Virgins? They were members of pure
 Reformed Churches, not of Idolatrous, Super-
 stitious Churches, no, they were Virgins, and
 yet the gates of Life were shut against them,
 Mat. 25. 11, 12. *The Virgins said, Lord, Lord,*
open to us; But he answered and said, Verily, I
 say

say unto you, I know you not. So that thou mayest be a member of a pure Church, and yet the strait gate of life shut against thy Soul another day. *Therefore this is not enough to prove,* that thou art in the way to life: *Few there be that find it!* Will you say, but I have suffered for Conscience sake, and for Truths sake, I have left a dear Land, and Fathers Houses, because I would not comply with the Superstition of the times? If this be done in sincerity, it is well for thee; but if in vain-glory, or for any by and base respect, thou mayest still be one of the *narrow afflicted way which leads to life.* Did not *Alexander* suffer with *Paul* when time was, and yet afterward proved an Apostate? Do we not read of some Hereticks in the primitive times, that have suffered unto death in the common cause of Christianity? Doth not the Scripture intimate, that men may give *their bodies to be burned*, and yet not have a spark of true Grace in their Souls, 1 Cor. 13. 1, 2, 3. So then, thou mayest suffer, yea suffer unto death it self in a righteous Cause, and yet not be in the way to life: *Few there be that find it!* Wilt thou say, but God hath given of his Spirit to me? If thou hast the *Converting, Sanctifying Grace* of the Spirit, then thou art in the right way; but if thou hast only the gifts of the Spirit, then thou art in the broad way still. Had not *Judas* gifts, whereby he was able to

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Pray and Preach too? Had not *Saul* gifts, whereby he was able to Govern a Nation? yet neither of them in the way to life. A man may be *garnished*, and yet under an *unclean spirit* still, *Matth. 23. 44*. How *garnished*? even adorned with excellent gifts, so as to be able to pray and to discourse edifyingly, and yet not in the way which leads to life: *Few there be that find it!* It is one of the most solemn, awful Meditations that it's possible for a man to think of, to consider how far one may go, and yet fall short of Heaven at last: What sins he may forsake, what duties he may practise, what gifts he may attain, what good he may do, what evil he may suffer in the Lords cause, and yet his Soul be shut out of the place of Life and Glory: *Oh how should this cause fear and trembling?*

Consider. 3. *Is it possible to enter into the gate and way of life.* Indeed it's hard work (as afterwards may be shewed more abundantly) and thence it's called a *strait gate*, yet it's possible, as the words of the Text do imply. It would be an improper speech to say, *Few there be that find it*, if none at all could find it: This shews that the way may be found, yea, and by some is found: Christ hath made the way *passable*, *Heb. 10. 20*. *He hath consecrated a new and living way through the vail of his flesh.* Christ by his blood hath set Heaven gates open (as when Christ was dying, the vail of the Temple rent) to true Believers

Believers on him; yea, and Eternal Life is freely offered to all where the Gospel cometh: Heaven is brought to your doors, Eternal Life is, as it were, brought and laid at your doors, if you will accept of it, when the Gospel is preached to you. All you that hear the Gospel this day, Men, Women, Children, that can hear and understand, Behold, I do here solemnly in the Name of the Lord declare to you, that you may have Eternal Life by Jesus Christ, if you will renounce Sin, and Self, and World, and all for Jesus Christ; Oh consider of it! And,

Consider. 4. *That this is a truth that concerns everyone seriously to think of.* True it is, that there are some that have special cause to fear and tremble, lest they should miss of Heaven, that is, such as are well to pass in this World. Not many Noble, not many Mighty are called, 1 Cor. 1.26. so not many Rich shall be saved. It was a solemn word which Christ spake, when he said, *Wo unto you that are rich, for you have received your Consolation*, Luke 6. 24. There cometh to my mind a passage of Buchanan (who was King James his Tutor) when he was upon his death-bed, King James sent to him to know how he did. Go, saith he, and tell the King, *that I am going to a place, where but few Kings shall come*; meaning, that he was going to Heaven, and but few Kings shall come there:

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even so but few of those that have much of this Worlds good, shall enter into the strait gate of Life. Therefore such of you as enjoy much of the profits and pleasures of the World, have special cause to tremble, lest haply the Lord should put you off with a Portion in this life. Yet this truth concerns all to think of, yea, even those that are already entred into the way of life: See that you go on in this way; see that you do not only work, but *work out* your own Salvation; and this the rather, because there are but few that shall be saved: *Many shall seek to enter in at the strait gate of Life, and shall not be able.*

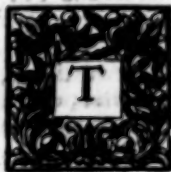
Christians



Christians ought to work out
their own Salvation, and that
with Fear and Trembling.

Phil. 2. 12.

*Work out your own Salvation with fear and
trembling.*



He scope of the Apostle in the
beginning of this Chapter,
is to perswade the *Philippi-
ans* unto Christian Love and
Unity, unto which there is a
most solemn obtestation in
the first and second Verses
of the Chapter: And in order thereunto, he
doth exhort unto Humility and Self-denial,
Vers. 3, 4. because Schisms and Contentions do
usually proceed from the *want* or *defect* in those
Graces. Had men that measure of Humility
and Self-Denial which would become Christi-
ans, they would certainly live in love and peace
one with another. Now this Self-denial is urged
here,

here by the Apottle, from the highest example and patern thereof that ever was, namely, the obedience of Jesus Christ the Son of God; which together with the glorious effects and consequents of it, is described from the fourth to this twelfth Verse of the Chapter. This Verse then, is an inference from that which is in the foregoing Verses expressed, as we see by the first word in it, [*Wherefore, &c.*] That *illative* particle [*Wherefore*] sheweth, that these words are inferred from the former Discourse: It is as if the Apostle had said, We must go to Salvation in the same way which Christ, who is the Captain of our Salvation hath gone before us: But Christ went in a way of Obedience and Self-denial, therefore we must do so likewise: Thus for the scope of the place.

In the words read we have two things,
 1. The duty, *viz. To work out Salvation*; which Salvation is here described from the subject of it, *your own Salvation*: It is said to be *ours* not *originally*; so it is Gods, as in *Chap. 1. vers. 28. Salvation, and that of God*: And *David* saith unto God, *Thou only art my Salvation*, *Psal. 62. 6.* But this Salvation is said to be *ours* *subjectively*, because we partake of it: It is ours in respect of Communication and Donation. God whose it is originally, is pleased to make us partakers of it: 2. We have the manner of the duty, in these words, [*with fear and trembling:*]

There

There are two words to the same purpose used, because of the momentous greatness of this work and duty, which is to be performed. We shall not insist upon any opening of the words, besides what may be spoken to under the Doctrines from them ; which are these two :

Doctr. 1. That men ought to work out their own Salvation.

Doctr. 2. That Christians ought to work out their own Salvation, even with fear and trembling.

To begin with the first of these Doctrines, namely, *That men ought to work out their own Salvation.*

In the Doctrinal prosecution of this point, we shall only attend two things : 1. To shew what is implied in working out our own Salvation. 2. The Reason of this point.

1. *What is implied in working out our own Salvation ; Or, When may a man be said so to do ?*

Ans. We must know *Negatively*, that herein is not implied, as though men had power to save themselves. Men are able to destroy themselves ; and that's all they can now do of themselves, *Hos. 13. 9. Thou hast destroyed thy self, O Israel.* There is a *Self-destruction* which every man is subject unto ; but there is no *Self-salvation*. Herein is the difference between man in his

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his first, and in his fallen estate: *Adam* was able to do and live, had he improved the ability which at first God bestowed on him; but since the fall none can do so: It is therefore given as the description of a man in his natural condition, that he is *without strength*, Rom. 5. 6. A man by nature, hath no spiritual strength for the performance of the thing that good is; nay, a natural man cannot so much as desire that which is good, much less can he perform it: Therefore in the next Verse to the Text, the Apostle saith, *That it is God that worketh both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure*. So that a man cannot will, he cannot desire, much less do, that which is truly good, except Divine, Supernatural help be afforded to him. And therefore though the Apostle say, *Work out your Salvation*, his meaning is not, as though men were able to save themselves: Nor is his meaning, as though men could by their works merit Salvation. In a meritorious work, there must be some proportion between the work, and the thing merited thereby; whereas there is no proportion between our Works and Salvation, Rom. 8. 18. *I reckon* (saith the Apostle) *that the sufferings of this present life, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed*. Suffering-work is hard work; passive obedience, is the hardest and highest obedience, therefore if a man could merit by any thing, it would
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be by suffering, when-as we see there is no proportion between our sufferings and the reward. Besides, to be saved by Works, is contrary to being saved by Grace: Works and Grace are in the matter of Salvation, as opposite as two things can be: *If it is of Works, it is not of Grace* (saith the Scripture) *Rom. 4.4. & 11.6.* But we are saved by Grace, *Ephef. 2.8.* *By Grace are ye saved, and not of your selves, it is the gift of God.* In a word, to merit is none of our work, it is Christs work: Though God calls us to work out our Salvation, yet not to merit it, that he never called any but Christ unto. Wherefore to speak *Affirmatively*:

1. Herein is implied *diligence in the use of means to obtain Salvation.* Many times in the Scripture, when we are bid to do this or that, the meaning is not as though we are able to do those things, only that we should wait upon God in the use of his own means, that so he might do it for us: As when God said to *Moses*, *Stretch thy hand over the Sea and divide it*, *Exod. 14.16.* This doth not shew, that it was in *Moses* his power to divide the Sea, which no arm of flesh could ever do; onely *Moses* was to use the means, and then God would do it: So the Lord saith, *Make you a new heart*, *Ezek. 18.31.* whereby is not meant, as though men could do this themselves; What man is able to turn a stone into a piece of flesh? Who then can turn an
heart

heart of stone into an heart of flesh? There is a Creating, and therefore an Infinite power that is required hereunto: But then the meaning is, that we should use the means. So when it is said, *Work out your own Salvation*, the meaning is, do you use the means, and then you are in Gods way, and may expect his blessing: If you be faithful in improving means, who knoweth but that God may do more for you, than ever you are able to do for your selves? As now, Prayer is one means: This we find used, Jer. 17.14. *Save me, O Lord, and I shall be saved:* And diligent hearing of the Word preached is a mean of Salvation; therefore an Angel from Heaven said unto *Cornelius*, that he should go to hear *Peter* preach, who should *speak unto him words whereby he should be saved*, Acts 11.14. And indeed all Divine Ordinances are means of Salvation; therefore are they called *the Wells of Salvation*, Isa. 12.3. The holy Appointments of God, are *Soul-saving* things, when he is pleased to own them, and bless them, and to go along with them: They are means either to begin the work of Salvation, or else to carry it on where the Lord hath already begun it: The Word and Prayer are means to begin this work, and Sacraments are means appointed to carry it on to perfection, where the Lord hath begun to save, or brought into a state of Salvation.

2. Herein is implied, *That a man do make sure of a sound, thorough work of Grace in his Soul* As the Apostle exhorteth, *2 Pet. 1. 10. Make your calling sure.* This is implied in working out Salvation, even to make sure of effectual Calling. In working out our Salvation is necessarily implied, the being brought into the state and way of *Salvation*: Now that is by effectual Calling; Grace is the way to Glory, *Salvation* begins in *Vocation*, *2 Tim. 1. 9. He hath saved us, and called us*; so that if a man be called, then he is saved, that is to say, in respect of his state he is so. Hence *Ezek. 18. ult. Turn yourselves, and live ye.* A man begins to live, when he begins to turn; wherefore in working out Salvation is implied, the practice of Repentance, *2 Cor. 7. 10. Repentance* is there said to be *unto Salvation*; so that the one of these argueth the other: And true *Faith in Christ* is there implied, *John 6. 28.* The Jews there say, *What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?* that is, what shall we do, that we may do that work which God requireth to be done, in order to Salvation? *Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent,* *vers. 29.* The Jews propound a Legal Question, they would fain have been saved in a way of doing, or by works of their own: Christ taketh them off from that, and tells them of Evangelical doing, even of Believing,

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Believing; that the work of Faith is that which is necessary to be attended by every man that would be saved.

3. Herein is implied, *Growing in Grace*; and therefore the Text saith, [*Work out*] your *Salvation*: Which phrase noteth, a *progressive motion*, that we are to go on in the way and work of Christianity; as the Apostle doth exhort, *Heb. 6.1, 2. Let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of Repentance, and Faith, and Doctrine of Baptisms, &c.* Let us not (saith he) content our selves with a state of Initiation, that we are become Christians, and so baptized; but let us go on still, let us not stand at a stay in Christianity, but let us go on, on still. This is implied, in *working out* Salvation, even that a man shall be on the gaining, growing hand in Grace and Godliness, in Faith and Holiness. It argueth not only effectual Calling, but also a diligent *following of that Calling*. As a man that would be a Workman in any Civil Calling, must not only begin to work, but must follow his calling: So if a man would be a *Workman in the matter of Salvation*, he must follow and go on with the business of Religion, and of his *Christian Calling*, *Hos. 6. 3. Follow on to know the Lord.* The Apostle in these words, speaketh unto such as had Grace, and were already in a state of Salvation; yet he saith to them, *Work out your Salvation.* These

Philip.

Philippians were, as we see in the beginning of the Epistle, *Saints in Christ Jesus*; not only *Saints* as the Jews were, that had a federal Holiness, but *in Christ Jesus*, that is, they were New-Testament Believers, such as had embraced the Christian Faith outwardly, and many of them inwardly and savingly; yet to these he saith, *Work out your Salvation, i.e. do it more and more*: Do not think you have Salvation enough already, but labour after more; seek after more Grace, more Humility, more Knowledge, more Faith, more Love, &c. Thus it was with *Paul*, in this Chapter he exhorts the *Philippians*, to work out their Salvation; in the next Chapter he sheweth by his own example, what it is so for to do, Chap. 3. vers. 12, 13, 14, *Not as though I were already perfect, but I follow after in reaching forth to those things which are before, I press towards the mark, &c.* he did not stand still, but kept going forward, being on the gaining hand every day. Not a day that passed over his head, but he did, and gained something in this matter of Salvation: He was a days journey nearer Heaven, every day than other.

4. *The improvement and exercise of Grace* is implied herein. The Apostle speaketh to the *Thessalonians*, of *their Work of Faith, and Labour of Love*, 1 Epist. Chap. 1. vers. 3. When Faith, and Love, and other Graces of the Spirit are exercised, then there is a work, even

Salvation work, which is attended. That stock of Grace which the Lord bestoweth upon his servants, it must be laid out for God: The Lord doth not bestow Grace (nor gifts) upon men, that so they should let them lie by them idle; but that so they might improve what they have received, so as shall make most for the honour and interest of him that gave it, and thereby to promote their own Salvation. As the not improving of Talents, is the way to miss of Salvation, as we see in the Parable of the Talents, *Matth. 25.* Adam had a large stock of Grace conferred upon him, the stock of a World was put into his hands, but he improved it not, and thence lost the life of himself, and all his Posterity: So the improvement of Talents is the way to further Salvation; yea, the truth is, that the more any man doth exercise Grace, the more Salvation shall he have: Degrees of Glory in Heaven, will be according to Improvements of Grace upon earth; therefore the Apostle saith, *He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully,* 2 Cor. 9. 6. and Christ saith, that *whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance,* *Matth. 13. 12.* *He that hath:* that is, he that improveth the Grace which he hath received; for not to use a thing, is as if a man had it not: So [*to have*] is to improve what a man hath; such a

one shall have much Grace here, and much Glory hereafter: The reason is, because the exercise of Grace doth bring much glory to God; therefore Christ said to the Disciples, *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.* John 15.8. It's a greater glory to God for a poor Soul to act faith upon him, or to exercise love towards him, than all the Creatures in the World that have not Grace, are able to bring unto him. Now the more any doth (through Grace) glorifie God in this World, the more shall he be glorified by God in the World which is to come.

5. Herein is implied, that decays in grace be repaired. It is indeed certain, that there is no falling away from true Grace, that is, totally and finally: Therefore the Apostle saith of true Christians, *they shall never fall,* 2 Pet. 1.10. You shall, saith he, hold on in your Christian course, till you come to the end of your race, and shall *never fall by the way*, that is, not *irrecoverably*: Yet it is sadly true, that there may be gradual decays, though that stock of Grace which God bestoweth upon the Soul in its first Conversion cannot be lost; yet a gracious Christian may be, as it were, in a swooning fit sometimes. *The wise Virgin slept*: The lively and vigorous actings of Grace may decay, yea, a man may decay in Knowledge, in Love, in Practice, that possibly he doth not pray so often as for-

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merly, nor hear so diligently, nor keep such a strict watch over his own heart, nor is so heavenly minded, nor so zealous for God, as once he was. A true Christian, if he be not very watchful, will be subject to not only *actual*, but even *habitual declensions*: As we see in the Christians at *Ephesus*, who had not only lost their *first works*, there was actual declensions; but their *first love also*, there was inward and habitual declension, *Rev. 2. 5.* Now when it is thus, they that would work out their own Salvation, must labour for renewing, strengthening Grace. As it was said to backsliding *Sardis*, *Repent, strengthen the things which remain, and are ready to dye*, *Rev. 3. 2, 3.* So as for decaying, dying, languishing Christians, the thing which concerns them, is to repent, and to seek after renewing Grace. As *David* in such a case did, *Psal. 51. 10. Renew a right spirit within me*; and again, *Vers. 12. Restore unto me the joy of thy Salvation*: This is necessary in order to working out Salvation. If a man be going to such a place, and turn out of his way, if ever he would come to his journey's end, he must return into his way again: So when a man is travelling to Heaven, if Temptation draw him aside, he must look to it, that he quickly return into the way of life again. *8.* Herein is implied *perseverance unto the end*. The Text doth not only say work,

work, but *work out*, which noteth an holding out in the way of Salvation to the end: The Greek word here used *κατεργάζεσθαι*, is a word of Perfection, and implieth a full and final ending of a matter: It is as if the Apostle had said, You must never leave working about your Salvation, till you have finished it, till you have made compleat work of it: As it is said concerning the Righteous, that *he shall hold on in his way*, Job 17.9. This is implied in working out Salvation, even that a man shall not give out, but *hold out*, and *hold on* in his Christian course to the very end. As this Apostle saith, *Phil. 3. 14. I press forward toward the mark of the high Calling*: He was resolved not to leave running till he come to the end of his race, even to the mark of high and heavenly Glory which his eye was set upon. This is requisite in order to obtaining Salvation: Therefore Christ saith, *He that endureth to the end, shall be saved*, Mat. 24. 13. If a man desire to be saved, then let him pray to the end, and believe to the end, and keep up a spirit of Repentance to the end, and be patient to the end, &c.

7. Another thing implied herein, is, *That every man must chiefly mind the Concernments of his [own] Soul*. This is intimated, when it is said, *your Own Salvation*. Alas, men are apt to mind *others* concernments, with the neglect of their *own*. It is a sad complaint which you

find, *Cant. 1.6.* They made me the keeper of the Vineyard, but my own Vineyard have I not kept: So there are that look after the Concernments of others, but mind not at all their own; nay, it may be that are busie in other mens matters, which do not at all belong to them, when in the mean time, the Salvation and Eternal Concernments of their *own* Souls are not minded as ought to be. There was a time when Peter said concerning *John*, *What shall this man do? John 21.21.* So men are apt to say, This such a man should do, and this is such an ones duty, whereas every one should think with himself, What is my duty? what is the work that I should do? As it was with *John* Baptists hearers, *Luke 3.12,13.* The people came and said, What shall *We* do? and the Publicans said, What shall *We* do? and the Souldiers said, What shall *We* do? Thus men ought to look to themselves, and to their own particular duty. A man should watch over his *own* heart, and look well to the frame of his *own* spirit: Then may he be said to work out his *own* Salvation. So much for the first thing.

We should come now to the Reasons of the Doctrine: I shall mention only one Reason at present, and that shall be taken from the high and absolute necessity of this matter. Indeed if it were needless, or an indifferent matter, men might be held excused, though they should not
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work out their own Salvation, at least, though they should not do it with fear and trembling (of which under the next Doctrine) but it is a thing of the greatest Concernment and necessity to be performed. It is necessary in respect of the Commandment of God, which requireth this work to be done: *There is a necessity of the Precept*; hence it was said to the Jews, that it was [necessary] that the word should first be spoken to them, Acts 13.46. Why was this necessary? but that so the Commandment of the Lord might be obeyed: The Lord had so commanded, that the Jews should have the first offer of the Gospel, therefore it was necessary that so it should be. Thus here, the Lord hath commanded that men should *work out their own Salvation*; hence in this Verse, doing thus is called *Obedience*. This is also a necessary means in order to obtaining Salvation; Salvation is not to be had without this: Hence Chrill saith, *Labour for everlasting life*, John 6.27. Certainly, the Lord would not prescribe unto men needless labour: If Eternal life could be had without Labour; if Salvation were to be obtained without working, the Lord would not require men thus to do. It is true, that if God hath decreed a mans Salvation, he shall be saved, but not without the use of means, for God hath decreed, that the end and the means shall go together: we may therefore say here, as Paul speak-

eth concerning his preaching the Gospel, 1 Cor. 9. 16. *Necessity is laid upon me, and wo unto me if I do it not.* So I say, necessity is laid upon every Soul of you, to work out your own Salvation, and wo unto you if you do it not. Besides, men by Nature are in a lost, perishing estate, and therefore it is most necessary for them to look and to labour after Salvation. As if a man be fallen into a pit, it is necessary that he should endeavour to get out of that pit; so 'tis here, men by nature are fallen into a *horrible pit* of Sin, Guilt, Misery, Death and Destruction, and therefore needful it is, that they should labour to get out of that woful pit; yea, the truth is, that other things are not needful in comparison of this, therefore Christ said to Martha, *Thou art careful about many things, but one thing is needful*, Luke 10. 41, 42. Alas! thus it is with men, yea, with the most of men, and with the greatest part of Christians also, their time and hearts are taken up about a thousand needless things: One man is careful how he may build a great house, but *this is not needful*; another is troubled about his Trading, how he may grow rich in this World, but *this is not needful*; Another is taking care night and day, how he may leave Portions for his Children after him, but *this is not needful*: There is *one thing needful*, to make sure of Salvation, that's needful to do, as Mary did, even to hearken

to, and to obey the Doctrine of Christ, which teacheth the way unto Salvation; this is needful, for a man to make sure that it shall go well with his Immortal Soul when he shall dye, and leave this World: Oh that is needful.

We therefore proceed unto the Use of the point; let it be a word of earnest *Exhortation*: Oh *make sure of your own Salvation*. Consider well what you heard, but now concerning the necessity of this matter, Salvation is that which must be had. As we say of bread, *Bread must be had*; so may we say of Salvation, *It must be had*; you are undone without it for ever. It had been better for you, that you had never been born, than that you should miss of Salvation at last. As the Disciples once cryed out, *Save us Lord, or we perish*, Matth. 8.25. So there is no middle way between these two, but either you must have Eternal Salvation, or else you must to Eternal Damnation.

Qu. But what shall we do that we may be saved?

Ans. Oh that there were many of you that did in earnest make such enquiries. Observe then these Rules of Direction:

1. *Take heed of thinking that you are in a state, or in the way of Salvation, when as it is not so.* Alas, it is thus with many, and this proveth the Eternal ruine of their Souls, Prov. 14.12. *There is a way which seemeth right unto a man,*

man, but the end thereof are the ways of death: There are that think they are going in the way which leads unto Life, when-as they are going in the way which will bring them down into the Chambers of Death. So it was with the Pharisees; therefore Christ said to them, that *he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;* and, *that the whole have no need of a Physician, but the sick,* Matth.9.13. They were righteous in their own eyes, they conceited themselves to be whole, and thence never sought after Christ the Physician of Souls for help and healing: This conceit was their ruine. Thus it is with millions, they feel not their need of Christ: Every man indeed knoweth, as to a general *Notional* Conviction that he hath need of Christ, but few that *feel* it. Men see not themselves in a Christless, lost condition, and thence they perish. This also was *Laodicea's* undoing, Revel.3.17. *Thou sayst, I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* This is the reason why many are never saved, even because they think themselves sure of Salvation already. Many millions of those lost Souls that are dropt down for ever into the pit of Eternal Darkness, this which you now hear was their ruine.

2. *Cast away those things that would hinder Salvation.* The gate of Salvation is a strait gate.

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You have heard what Christ saith; *Matth. 7. 14. Strait is the gate which leadeth into life, and few there be that find it.* Now if a man be to go in at a strait gate, he had need throw away those things which are Incumbrances, or he will never be able to enter; So if you desire to enter in at the strait gate of Life, away with those things that would hinder: As now, the World is an Enemy to Salvation, when mens hearts are set upon it, they will be drowned in the Pit of Perdition; their end will not be Salvation, but Destruction, *Phil. 3. 19. 1 Tim. 6. 9.* As ever therefore you desire to be saved, take heed of having your hearts too much engaged in the World. Again, sin will hinder Salvation, and therefore if you would be saved, cast sin out of your hearts and lives, *Jer. 4. 14. O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved:* Forsake sin in life, yea, and in heart too, if ever you would be saved, yea, and sinful Company also; for sinful Companions are the greatest hindrances of Salvation. What saith the Scripture, *Forsake the foolish, and live, Prov. 9. 6.* Would you live, would you be saved? then forsake the foolish, beware of prophane or corrupting Company. *Prov. 13. 20. He that walketh with wise men, shall be wise; but a Companion of fools shall be destroyed:* So that sinful Companions will bring to destruction; and therefore whoso desireth Salvation, must be-
ware

ware of such. Alas, this which I now speak of, hath been the ruine of many a Soul that hath been in an hopeful way towards Heaven. Sometimes the Word of God meets with a sinner, and he hath secret purposes to forsake his sin, and to return to God by Jesus Christ, but he falls into wicked Company, and they entice him to Drinking or Gaming, or to some other evil course, whereby the Convictions which were upon his Conscience are lost, and his Soul is undone to all Eternity. The truth is, that evil Company is one of the greatest and most ruining snares in the World; and therefore if you love your Souls, Oh beware of it!

3. *Make sure of those things which are necessary to be attended, in order to Salvation.* As now Repentance is of absolute necessity to Salvation; hence when the Jews were pricked at the heart, by a Sermon which Peter preached unto them, and cryed out, *Men and Brethren, what shall we do?* that is to say, What shall we do in order to obtaining Salvation? The first word which Peter saith to them is, *Repent*, Acts 2. 37, 38. There is no Salvation for impenitent sinners; therefore Christ said, *Luke 13. 13. Except ye repent, ye shall perish*: And that you may see he is in earnest, he cometh over with it again, *Vers. 5. Except you repent, you shall perish*. The words are plain and peremptory, *Repent or perish, Repent or perish*. Tell me then, and let

let thy Conscience answer to it, Hast thou repented of all thy sins? Doth not Conscience tell thee, thou hast been guilty of some sins which never were repented of to this day? Why then be it known to thee, if thou shouldst dye in thy present condition, thou canst not be saved. So again, Faith in Christ is requisite (as before was hinted) in order to Salvation; therefore when the Jaylor said, *What must I do to be saved?* Answer was made, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,* Acts 16. 30, 31. Oh then make sure of an interest in Jesus Christ, by Faith in his Name, that you may be saved. Ay, but men say, we cannot Repent, and we cannot believe of our selves. Very true: Therefore,

4. *Be diligent in the use of means*: The want of this, is that that utterly and inexcusably ruins the Souls of men, they will not work (as the Text requireth) about their *Salvation*; they will not labour and take pains in the use of means as they should do, that they may be saved. Oh! this spiritual sloth; and sluggishness is that which kills many a soul: God hath given thee natural abilities, why dost thou not improve them? Thou hast a tongue that is able to pronounce good words as well as bad ones; why then dost thou not make use of thy tongue for good and profitable discourse? why dost thou not ask after the way to Salvation? why dost thou not
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take unto thee words for prayer, as well as express vain, frothy, loose, and it may be prophane speeches? Thy legs are able to carry thee to one house as well as another, why then dost thou not frequent good Company? why dost thou not go to houses where the servants of God are praying together, as well as go into wicked Company, or into houses where there is loose and lewd doings? Sinners will not do as much as they can; they will not hear, read, pray, when they ought and might do it; but are like unto them, Jer. 6: 16. *The Lord said, This is the good way, walk therein; and you shall find rest for your Souls: But they said, We [will not] walk therein.* So God saith, For-sake such a course, and such a Company. *I will not*, saith a wicked heart. Practise such a duty (saith God) read thy Bible much, and pray in secret every day. *I will not*, saith a wicked sinner. Oh what a Wretch art thou, that darest thus disobey the voyce of the Lord! Ah! wo be to thee if thou goest on thus in a careless neglect of God, and of thy own Salvation!

5. *Bestake thy self unto God in Jesus Christ for Salvation.* This Salvation is from Heaven, and therefore go to Heaven for it. Do you not remember what Christ said to that woman of Samaria. John 4: 14. *If thou knewest — thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given*

given thee living water. Would you partake of the waters of Life and Salvation, then go to the Lord and ask for it: The reason why men partake not hereof, is, because they ask not for it: Do but ask, and ask as you should do, and you shall receive; Ask earnestly, constantly, sincerely, and you shall have Salvation. Know for encouragement, the Lord is able to save thee, yea, and full of Grace and Compassion, willing to save all that come unto him. Only then you must remember to ask in season, *Isa. 55.6. Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.*

Therefore this brings to the last Direction, which is this, *Improve your time, work while it is day,* John 9.4. while you have time, *up and be doing*: Let not this great work of your Salvation stand still, but while you have time, labour about it night and day, yea, every day follow this work: Let not a day pass without something done this way, get every day a Rep nearer Heaven than you were before: And in special, *the Lords-Day* is a season which should be improved to this end. Indeed other works must not be done upon this day, *servile works* may not, but *Spiritual work, Soul-work, Salvation-work* is this day to be attended. Improve then every opportunity, Oh let not any slip, without some good done: And especially remember the present opportunity, to take hold
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of it; concerning which you have heard more largely. To be sure this thing is your present duty. If a mans house were on fire, his present work would be to think how he might quench it: Oh! thy Immortal Soul is in danger of Hell-fire every moment! Thy poor Soul hangs over the Eternal flames, only by the twine thred of a rotten life (as I may so speak) if that break, thy Soul is dropped down into endless and endless wo; And is it not thy *present work* to endeavour with might and main, that thy Soul may be delivered from this danger, before the Pit, from whence there is no Redemption, hath shut its mouth upon thee? Jesus, that delivers from the wrath to come, let him be thy Salvation!

We come now to the Second Doctrine, namely,

That Christians ought to work out their own Salvation, even with fear and trembling.

In speaking to this point, we shall observe the same method which was attended under the former Doctrine.

1. To shew what is implied in the *Fear and trembling*, wherewith Salvation is to be wrought out. 2. The Reasons of the Doctrine.

Q^a. 1. What is implied in this fear and trembling, whereby Salvation is to be wrought out?

Ans^r. 1. Herein is implied, an holy fear of God; Hence in *Ephes. 6. 5.* Servants are bid to be obedient to their Masters, with fear and trembling: And in *Col. 3. 22.* Servants are bid to be obedient to their Masters, *fearing God.* That which in one place is expressed by *fear and trembling,* is in the other place called *fearing God.* Thus also *2 Cor. 7. 1.* *Perfect holiness in the fear of God:* There the Apostle doth exhort the *Corinthians* unto the same duty, which here he exhorteth the *Philippians* unto: *To perfect holiness in the fear of God;* and to *work out our Salvation with fear and trembling,* are the same thing: I say, an holy fear of God, namely, lest he should be dishonoured, as the Lord speaketh by the Prophet *Malachi, If I be Lord, where is my fear? and if I be a Father, where is my honour?* *Mal. 1. 6.* This is indeed the true fear of God, when a man is afraid lest Gods name should any way suffer dishonour by him; and when a man is afraid of losing Gods favour, and dreads the displeasure of God as the greatest evil. This is necessarily implied here in *working out Salvation,* because Salvation stands in the favour of God: Therefore it is three times expressed in *Psalms 80. Cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved,* *vers. 3. 2, 19.* So then Salvation consists in the *shinings of the face of God,* that is to say, in his favour: And to be cast out

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of his favour, implieth *everlasting destruction*. It is said concerning Reprobates, that they shall be punished from the presence of the Lord with *everlasting destruction*, 2 Thess. 1.9. So that to be excluded Gods gracious presence, doth infer *everlasting destruction*; therefore to work out Salvation with fear, doth imply an holy fear of losing the favour of God.

2. Herein is implied, a *fear with respect to the service of God*, that is, lest God should not be served and worshipped after a due and acceptable manner, Psal. 2. 11. *Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoyce with trembling*: Fear and tremble lest you should miss it in the service of God. And indeed all acceptable Service or Worship doth proceed from a principle of fear in the heart towards God, Heb. 12. 28. *Let us have Grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear*. If a man doth serve God acceptably, his service doth proceed from a gracious principle of godly fear: And men express their fear of God, in and by their serving of him; therefore the Service or Worship of God is in the Scripture called his fear, Psal. 19. 9. *The fear of the Lord is clean*, that is, the Worship and Ordinances of God, whereby men express their fear towards him: And the true *Worshippers* of God are stiled *fearers* of him. Psal. 115. 12, 13. *He will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron: He will*
bless

bleſs them that fear the Lord. Mark, here are three ſorts of perſons ſpoken of; 1. *The houſe of Iſrael*, that is, the common Members in the Church of *Iſrael*. 2. *The houſe of Aaron*, that is, the Miniſters in the Church of *Iſrael*. 3. *Thoſe that fear the Lord*; that is, Proſelytes to the true Religion and Worſhip of God; ſuch as did ſerve God in that way of Worſhip which himſelf hath appointed. Now this fear is implied, in *working out our Salvation with fear and trembling*: For Gods Service and Glory, and our Salvation go together. It is the great goodneſs of God, that theſe cannot be ſeparated but that in faithful attending to the one, we ſhall promote the other alſo. A man cannot ſerve God aright, but that he will thereby help forward his own Salvation; hence the Pſalmiſt ſaith, *It is good for me to draw nigh to God*, Pſal. 73.28. It is not only good in it ſelf, but *good for me*: Why? Becauſe in ſerving God, he did promote his own Eternal ſafety and welfare. And thoſe unto whom Salvation is promiſed, are deſcribed to be ſuch as *ſerve God*; and they againſt whom Deſtruction is threatened, are ſaid to be ſuch as *ſerve him not*, Mal. 3.18. Wherefore,

4. Herein is implied, *An awful reverential reſpect unto the Word and will of God.* This in Scripture is called the *fear of Gods name*, Mal. 4.2. There are many that have a kind of na-

natural, servile fear of the Divine, Infinite Majesty, that yet do not *fear his Name*, that is to say, they have not a due respect to his Word, nor do they reverence the Authority of his Command as ought to be; but this is here included. Hence we read of *fear of the Commandment*, Prov. 15. 13. *Whoso despiseth the Word, shall be destroyed; but he that feareth the Commandment, shall be rewarded*: He that regardeth not the Word of God, shall perish; but whoso feareth his Commandment, shall receive the reward of Life and Salvation; hence the promise is made to such, as *tremble at Gods Word*, Isa. 66. 2, 5. This fear of the Commandment, is, when a man dare not disobey the Command, or go contrary to the revealed will of God in any thing; when he had rather venture any hazard, than to violate the holy Commandment: Thus it was with *David*, Psalm 119. 161. *Princes have persecuted me — but mine heart stands in awe of thy Word*. He had rather incur the displeasure of Princes, than any way go against the Word, and revealed Will of God. And a respect unto the Word of God is necessarily included, in *working out Salvation*; for the Word is the *Rule of Obedience* which every one must observe that would be saved, 1 Tim. 3. 16. *The Scriptures are able to make wise unto Salvation*. The written Word sheweth sufficiently, both what must be done, and what must not be done;

done; what things a man must practise, and what he must forsake, if ever he would attain unto Life and Salvation.

4. Herein is implied, *An holy fear and jealousy, lest haply a man should miss, and fall short of Salvation.* Work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling; that is to say, since there is Salvation purchased by the Obedience of Jesus Christ, O fear and tremble, lest you should by any means miss of this Salvation; as the same Apostle exhorts the Hebrews, Chap. 4. vers. 1. *Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.* The Children of Israel (saith the Apostle) they began well, but they did not end well: They came out of Egypt, but they held not out till they came to Canaan: Oh fear lest it should be so with you; lest after all your Professions and Reformati^ons, and good beginnings in the ways of God, you should at last come short of that Salvation, which is the end, of all. Thus also he speaketh here in the Text. This Fear is a vertue opposed to Security and Self-Confidence: And therefore if a man doth thus fear, he taketh the right way, and the right course towards Salvation: For Security is the way to ruine, 1 Cor. 10. 12. *Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he falleth: None are in such danger, of falling, as they that think they stand.* Self-Confidence is a fore-

runner of Destruction ; so fear, in respect of a mans own weakness and jealousy over his own heart, is a notable means of being preserved unto Salvation. Therefore,

5. Herein is implied, *Lowliness and Humility*. Some have well observed, that this phrase of *Fear and Trembling*, is used five times in the Scripture, and always it is taken in this sense, even for *Lowliness and Humility*. And this suits here with the Context ; where the scope of the Apostle (as before was intimated) is to exhort to *Humility and Self-denial* ; and this expressed by saying, *Work out your Salvation with fear and trembling*. There are two mighty hindrances of Salvation : One is *Security*, unto this *fear* is opposed ; if you would be saved, then beware of *Security*, but *fear*. Another hindrance of Salvation is *Pride*, unto this *Trembling or Humility* is opposed : And this is well put in, because if men work about their Salvation, they are apt to be proud. There is nothing more natural unto man, than to be proud and self-confident by reason of his own works ; If men labour in the practice of works of Righteousness, which are, though not the cause, yet the way unto life and happiness, they are apt to rest therein ; and such Souls are in the greatest danger of ruine. There is no evil more dangerous, than that of spiritual *Pride*, when men rest in their Prayers, and Duties, and good Works ;

Works; therefore this of *Trembling* is fitly put in by the Apostle, when he exhorts to *work* about *our own Salvation*.

6. Herein is implied great care and diligence in the work of Salvation. This fear is not a fear of *Dissidence*, but of *Disidence*: It is not I say, a fear of distrust or despair, as if a man could not be assured of his Salvation, no such thing is intended or implied in the words; for that is contrary to other Scriptures, which require us to endeavour after *Assurance*, which sheweth, that Assurance is attainable; and also contrary to the experience of Saints, who have some of them had a full Assurance: But it intimateth, that men should be very diligent in endeavouring after Salvation; that every one should make this matter of Salvation his main business: And not to do, as most do, who mind other things in the first place, and look after Salvation, and the Eternal Concernments of their Souls only in the second place: But we should remember and do what Christ saith, Matth. 6. 33. *Seek first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*: Even so Salvation, and the great things of the Kingdom, are in the first and chief place to be attended: And this is implied, in *working with fear and trembling*.

Qu. 2. But why should it be thus?

Ans. That is the second thing to be spoken

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to: We shall only mention two *Reasons* of this point.

1. *Because of the difficulty which is in attaining to Salvation.* Heaven is in the Scripture compared to an Hill, even so going towards Heaven, is going up hill: Now that's hard; to go down hill is natural and easie, so it is in going to Hell. But going in the way of Salvation, is like going up hill, or like swimming against the stream, which you know is not easie: The way of Salvation is a *narrow way*. You have heard that Christ hath said, *Narrow is the way which leadeth unto Life.* Now if a man be walking in a narrow path, he had need look well to every step that he taketh, lest haply he should turn out of the right way. The gate of Salvation is a *strait gate*; therefore Christ hath said, *Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many shall seek, and shall not be able,* Luk. 13. 24. If a man were to go in at a wide gate, that were easie, and needed no striving about it; but to get in at a strait gate, will cost a man labour and striving.

But a little to enlarge here; there are two things especially that shew the difficulty which is in obtaining Salvation: And that therefore it is to be sought after with fear and trembling;

1. In that there are many *Impediments* to hinder a man from coming into, or from going on in the

the way of Salvation. There are many and mighty Enemies unto Salvation. As now, the Devil is one Enemy to Salvation, his name is *Abaddon*, and *Apollyon*, that is, a Destroyer: Christ and Satan are most contrary in Nature, Properties and Works; Christs work is to be a Saviour of Souls, but the Devils work is to be a Destroyer of Souls: And this is a mighty Enemy: hence the Scripture speaketh of *the power of the Enemy*, and the Apostle saith, *We wrestle not with flesh and blood*, that is, not with weak Enemies, but with *Principalities and Powers*, even with strong and potent Enemies, *Ephes. 6. 12*. And also a most subtile Enemy, therefore compared, not only to a Serpent, but to an Old Serpent, *Rev. 12. 9*. because of his exceeding subtilty. Now if a man hath a Potent and Politick Enemy to watch all opportunities against, this calls for fear and care, lest his Enemy should be his ruine. Satan labours by *fraud* to hinder the Salvation of sinners; thence sometimes he perswades them, that they are in the way of Salvation, when as it is not so; and sometimes he perswadeth a sinner, that it is soon enough, and too soon for to look after Salvation: Thus he ruines many by *Presumption*. Also he labours to hinder the Salvation of Soules by *force*, and thence perswadeth them, that it is too late for them to look after Salvation, and so ruines them by *despair*. The Devil doth
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what he can to keep men from entering into the way of Salvation; or if he cannot do that, then he endeavours to hinder them from going on in that way: Whence it is, that they that are brought into the state of Grace and Salvation, meet with new fears, new difficulties, new temptations, which other men are not acquainted with, and which themselves in former times were not troubled with.

Again, the *World* is another Enemy, which doth greatly hinder mens Salvation. Worldly Incumbrances are a marvelous Impediment; hence is that *Heb. 12. 10. Let us lay aside every weight.* What are these weights but worldly Incumbrances? If a man hath weights tied about his legs, these will hinder him from making any great progress in his way. So it is here, worldly Incumbrances are as weights, which hinder from going forward in the way to Salvation. There are the *reputed good things* of the World, and in these there is a temptation and a snare to the Soul; *e. g. worldly gain and profit* is an heavy snare, and that which hindreth the Salvation of many a Soul. Some that have bid fair for Heaven, yet have fallen short at last, because of this: Some that have wrought much and long about their Salvation, yet have not been able to work it out, by reason of this snare. We read in the Gospel, of a man that came to Christ to know what he should do that he

he might have Eternal Life : He was willing to *work*, that he might be *saved* : He came with a Legal Question, and with a Legal Spirit : Christ suiteth his Answer according to the Enquirer, and tells him of observing the Commandments of the Law. The man professeth, that he had been diligent in keeping these for many years : Christ then toucheth him where his greatest wound and snare was, namely, his inordinate love to earthly things, and *to try him*, the Lord bids him forsake all his worldly possessions to follow him ; but then the man goeth away with a sad heart, seeing that he must either miss of Eternal Salvation, or lose the World, and of the two, chooseth rather to part with Eternal Life, then to part with his worldly gain : Hereupon Christ said, *How hardly shall they that have riches, enter into the Kingdom of God : It is easier for a Camel to go through a needles eye, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God*, Luke 18. 24, 25. It is an hard matter for any man to be saved ; but for a rich man much more hard than for others ; were it not that with God all things are possible, it would not be possible for such an one to be saved. So for the *pleasures of the World*, they are a great snare and hindrance to Salvation. A man must forsake these, so far as they stand in opposition to the will of God, but it is hard so far to do : How hard is
it

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it for a Camel-heart to forsake the pleasures of sin? A poor Creature thinks with himself, if I should turn into the way of Salvation, then I must never see merry day more; here his Soul sticks and perisheth. And, as for *the evil things of the World*, these are also great obstacles in the way to life, *e. g. The cares of this World, the Thorny-ground bearer*, though he did and suffered much in order to Salvation, he went far, and held out long in an high and glorious Profession of the Gospel, yet after all, *the care of this World* proved his ruine, *Matth. 13.22.* Alas, men take more care how they shall live in this World, wherein they shall contrive but for a moment, than they do how they shall live in another World, where they must be to all Eternity. And hence it is that Salvation is neglected, and the means conducing thereunto are neglected: Men are not so frequent and diligent in hearing the Word as they ought to be, and prayer in Families; but especially prayer in secret is lamentably neglected; and the pretence is, they cannot spare time from their *worldly occasions*, to attend these duties of their *Christian Calling*. Thus doth the World eat out the heart and life of Religion. So for *the Crosses of the World*, they are also a very great snare: Men would fain have their Heaven here and in Heaven too, they would fain have their Paradise upon earth: But when they see that that cannot be,

be, then they are discouraged, and knocked off from Religion, and from Salvation. There have been that have begun to work about their Salvation, that yet have not been able to *work it out*, or to finish what they begun, because of this which you now hear. The Lord Jesus Christ spake an excellent Parable to this purpose, which you may see *Luke 14. 27, 28, 29. Whosoever doth not bear his Cross, cannot be my Disciple: Which of you intending to build a Tower, doth not first count the cost; lest after he hath laid the foundation, he is not able to finish it.* Alas, there are that enter upon Religion, and do not think what it will cost them; and thence when they meet with unexpected temptations and difficulties, though they made a good beginning, they come to a miserable end at last. Now then inasmuch, as the *Profits, Pleasures, Cares, Crosses* of the World, are such Impediments in the way to life, men had need work out their Salvation with fear and trembling. Yet there is another Enemy more dangerous than all these, that is, *Self*. The Ancient that prayed, *Lord deliver me from that miserable Wretch my self*, had a great deal of reason for what he said. *Self-denial* is requisite in order to Salvation, as the Apostle sheweth in this Context, but that's an hard task. The first Lesson in Christianity is an hard Lesson, namely, that a man must *deny himself*, *Matth. 16. 24. Natural-Self* must be denied, *Prov. 3. 8. Lean*

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not to *their own understanding*. A mans *own* understanding, his *own* will, his *own* affections and inclinations, so far forth as they stand in opposition to, or in competition with the will of God, must be denied; yet there is no man that hath any acquaintance with his own heart, but finds that this is hard work. So for *Corruption and Sinful-self*, this must be denied, yet this is very difficult: The sins of men are like strong fetters, which keep them from going forward in the way to Salvation. Peter said to Simon Magus, *Thou art in [the bond] of iniquity*, Acts 8.23. How should a man that is *bound* hand and foot get forward? Thus do the *Bonds of iniquity*, the *Chains of sin*, keep down the Souls of men, that they cannot mount up towards Heaven: A very hard thing it is to part with a beloved darling Lust. Mens *sins* are called their *members*, Col. 3.9. *Mortifie your members*, because they are as dear, and men are as loth to part with them, as the members of the bodily life and limbs are not more dear to the sinner, than are the vile lusts of the heart. Hence Christ saith, *If thy right eye offend thee, pull it out; and if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee*, Mat. 5.29,30. Many a man that hath a lust, that he had as lieve have his right eye pulled out of his head, or his right hand cut off from his arm, as to part with that sin, yea, and rather too. As I remember I have read of a miserable man, that was addicted

to the sin of Drunkenness, and thereby a disease in his eyes was cherished; and being perswaded by some to leave his Drunkenness, because it was hurtful to his eyes: Replied, *that he had rather lose his eyes, than part with his Drunkenness.* Miserable Wretch! Thus hard is it to forsake sinful-self. Yet there is that which is harder than all this, for even Righteous-self must be denied also. The Apostle sheweth the reason why the Jews miscarried in seeking after Salvation was, because *they went about to establish their own Righteousness*, Rom. 10.3. for a man to Confess Sin, and to Reform, and Hear, and Pray, and Fast, and yet to renounce all this, and to abhor himself after all, *this is hard, this is hard.* 2. It appears that it is an hard thing to be saved, in *that those things which are requisite to Salvation, are not easily attained.* As now, 1. You heard the last time, that Repentance is necessary to Salvation. Therefore Repentance is said to be *unto life*, Acts 11.18. But the practice of Repentance is no easie work. Indeed that which some take for Repentance is easie; that is, when a man hath sinned, in words to say that he is sorry for it, and God forgive me: But true Repentance is not in words only, but from the heart: It is *heart-work*, and therefore *hard work*, Joel 2.13. *Rent your hearts;* For a man to have his heart rent within him, must needs be *hard* to endure. To have any member rent from the body is hard, but what then

then is it for to have the very hearts rent? Jer. 4-3. *Plough up the fallow ground of your hearts: Your hearts are over-grown with the weeds of sin, but these must be ploughed up with godly Sorrow and Repentance for sin.* For a man to suffer furrows to be made in his heart within him, how tedious and how terrible is it. 2. Faith in Christ is necessary to Salvation, but it is no easie matter to believe: For a man to renounce Sin, Self and World, and to close with Jesus Christ upon his own blessed Terms, is a hard work: Therefore Christ hath said, *John 6. 44. No man can come to me, except the Father draw him: There must be drawing for it, and drawing of the Almighty, or the Soul will never come to Christ; for sin draweth, and the World draweth, and the Devil draweth, to pull the Soul away from Christ, and therefore except God by an Infinite hand draw the Soul to Christ, they will not come together.* See what the Scripture saith, *Ephes. 1. 19, 20. The exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead: So that Power, Mighty Power, Greatness of Power, Exceeding greatness of Power, is put forth in making a Soul to believe, nay, the same power which was exerted in raising Christ from the dead: And that was such a mighty Work, as a greater never was. When Christ was brought into the*
 Prison

Prison of the Grave, the sins and guilt of all the World of God's Elect, was laid upon him, and therefore it was the mightiest work that ever was to raise Christ out of the Grave; yet the like Infinite Power is required to make us believe. It is as hard a matter to make a Soul believe, as it is to raise the dead; and therefore it is a work beyond the power of any man or creature. A Carnal man once having a Daughter in despair, being asked how she did, *Tush, tush* (says he) *she is well enough, if she would but believe; she aileth nothing, only she wants belief.* Soon after it pleased God to strike this mans Conscience with terror; and then he was bid to believe, what can you not believe now? *Oh* (saith he) *there are millions of sins I have been guilty of, and God hath let loose all the Devils of Hell upon my Soul; and how is it possible for me to believe?* Alas, men that think it is an easie matter to believe, never knew what it was. To *presume* is easie, or to *despair* is easie, but to *believe* is hard. There never was any man that did believe, but he found hard work of it. These things then shew, that it is an hard matter to obtain Salvation: Carnal hearts would be pleased well with it, if Ministers would sow pillows under mens elbows, and tell them that they might easily get to Heaven: But Truth saith otherwise, God saith otherwise:

Real. 2: For the paucity of the number of them that

that shall be saved. If many should be saved, and a few miss of Salvation, yet there were cause for us to fear and tremble, lest we should be of those few : how much more, when many shall fall short of Salvation, and but few that shall attain thereunto. • But of this you have heard from another Scripture more largely.

We proceed therefore to the use of the point : Let it be of earnest Exhortation, and that in the words of the Text, *Work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling* : So that you do not on'y work about, but work out your Salvation, and that you do it *with fear and trembling*. And for Rules and Directions here. 1. *Go to work understandingly.* David prayeth, *Give me understanding, and I shall live*, Psal. 119. 144. even so, if you would have Life and Salvation, then labour after spiritual understanding. It is true, knowledge alone will not save, a man may have a wonderful measure of knowledge, and yet perish ; nevertheless, the want of knowledge may destroy a man, *Hosea 4. 6. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.* He that would be a Workman as to any Civil Calling, must have knowledge : So he that would be a Workman as to his general Calling, must have spiritual knowledge. A workman hath the Idea, Model and Platform of his work in his head, whereby he is enabled to go to work understandingly, that he knoweth where to begin, and how to

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go on, and where to finish : So he that would be a Workman, as to this work of Salvation, must get a Platform thereof into his head and heart; he must know what work of the Law, what of the Gospel, what Preparation, what Conviction, what Contrition, what Humiliation, what Faith, what holiness, &c. is requisite in order to Salvation. 2. *Look well to your Foundation* : As in all works, except the Foundation be right, the work will come to nothing. So it is in this work of Salvation. Oh therefore take heed of building upon a sandy Foundation. They that build upon Priviledges, or Gifts, or Duties, or Creatures, build upon a sandy Foundation : But see that you build upon the Rock. Remember what you have lately heard in many Sermons, concerning the wise and the foolish Builders, from *Mat. 7.24. to 28.* Christ is the only safe Foundation to build upon, *1 Cor. 3.11.* *Other Foundation can no man lay, besides that which is laid, even Jesus Christ* : Therefore see that you build upon him, and upon him wholly and only : Not partly upon Christ, and partly upon other things, but wholly on Christ alone. 3. *Be often examining how this work goes forward* : The reason why this work of a mans *own Salvation* goeth no more forward, is, because the duty of *Self-Examination* is no more practised : Therefore examine whether you have Grace, *2 Cor. 13.5.* and whether you grow in Grace : examine

mine whether you have laid a good Foundation, and also how far you have proceeded in the work. Alas, some think the work is well over, when as it is to begin still; and the reason of their mistake is, because they do not take pains to examine how matters stand between God and their Souls. I have read of an Heathen, that every day when night came, would call himself to account; and if he had not received and done some good that day, he would be much troubled. Alas, how much do many Christians fall short of this? 4. *Allow time for this matter, and make it your work.* Great works must have time allowed to do them in. Now *the greatest work which every Man hath to do in this World, is to make sure that his Soul get safe to Heaven, when he dieth and leaveth this World;* therefore allow your selves time to attend the Duties of your general Calling, every day allow your selves time for reading the Scripture, and for Prayer in your Families, and in your Closets also; you can allow your selves time for other matters, nay it may be for needless matters, and very vanities; and will you not allow time to look after the Eternal Concernments of your immortal Souls? you can allow your selves time to sleep, and will you not allow your selves time to pray? Rather be without sleep, nay without necessary Food, than live without Prayer, and see that you make

make this business of *Salvation your work*. Do not think to make it a by-work, which you will mind when you have nothing else to do. But whatever be done, or left undone, let not this matter of your *Salvation* be left undone, *Luke 10.* two last Verses. 5. *Set about the work, not in your own, but in the strength of Christ*, 1 Sam. 2.9. *By strength*, that is, Humane strength, *shall no man prevail*: You will certainly miscarry in the work, if you set upon it in your own strength: There are mighty Corruptions (*Sons of Anak*) to be subdued, there are mighty strong Temptations to be resisted, there are great Duties to be performed; therefore enter upon all in the name of Christ, *Phil. 4. 13.* *I can do all things through Christ strengthening of me*. Then may you be able to subdue all Corruptions, resist all Temptations, perform all Duties, bear all Afflictions, if the strength of Christ be engaged with you and for you. 6. *Live in love and peace amongst yourselves*. The Apostle in this Context is exhorting to peace and unity, and then saith, *Work out your own Salvation*: Why, what's that to the business of Salvation? Oh yes very much, for Divisions do exceedingly hinder Salvation-work: Therefore it is that the Devil maketh it his main design to sow discord amongst Christians, because he knoweth that the work of God will never go forward as it should do, if there be Contentions and Schisms amongst

amongst the Lords people. Alas, when it is thus, mens time and spirits will be taken up about parties, that every one in stead of working out his own Salvation, will be studying and busying himself how he may promote the interest of his own party and faction: I tremble to think what account many amongst us will be able to give unto Christ another day in this respect.

Now for Motives here,

Consider. 1. *The possibility which is in this thing* which you are exhorted unto. Indeed it is an hard matter for men to work out their own Salvation (as but now was proved unto you) yet it is possible: If you will *abound in the work of the Lord, your labour shall not be in vain*, 1 Cor. 15. ult. Certain it is, that there is a possibility of being saved, for Christ hath purchased Salvation: And God freely offers it in the Gospel to all that will accept of it, upon gracious and blessed terms. Besides, if a man be once brought into the way of Salvation, he is then able (by the Grace of God) to *work out his Salvation*. A man that hath not Grace, is not able to give himself Grace; but a man that hath Grace, is able to get more Grace, if he will be laborious in improving what he hath, *Matth. 13. 12.*

Consider. 2. *The momentous greatness of this matter*: It is a matter of the highest concernment which now you hear of; and therefore you had

had need be conversant about it, *with fear and trembling*. If a man were set about a work, and it were said to him, if you do your work well, you shall live, but if you do not your work well, you shall dye; With what trembling would he do it? So 'tis here, if you do this work well, you shall live; but if otherwise, you shall dye: You are about a matter of life and death, nay, of Eternal life, or Eternal death, and therefore you had need be in good earnest. Of such moment is this Salvation, that if a man should fall short of it, all the World is never able to make him amends, or to countervail his loss: You know what Christ hath said, *Matth. 16. 26. What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his Soul?* If a man should lose the Salvation of his Soul, all the World can never make him amends for that loss.

Consider. 3. *That Salvation is not in your own hands, but depends upon the good pleasure of God:* This is the motive which the Apostle makes use of in this Context, *Work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling; For (saith he) it is God that worketh of his own good pleasure:* As if it were said, Tremble to miss God's season; if you do not now work out your Salvation, it may be God's season will be over, and then you may go to work, and all in vain. Remember what you have heard concerning the strivings of Gods Spirit,

Spirit, he will not strive alwayes: Remember how it was with *Eſau*: And Remember how it was with the Children of *Iſrael*, they neglected God's ſeaſon, and afterwards laboured in vain to enter into *Canaan*. Remember how it was with the fooliſh Virgins, they came and knocked and cryed, and ſaid, *Lord, Lord, open unto us*; but the door was ſhut upon them.

Conſider. 4. *That except you [work out] your Salvation, you had as good do nothing.* Though you ſhould work, if you do not work out, you do nothing. As in running a Race except a Man hold out to the end of his Race, he loſeth the Crown; O then, be ſure that you ſo run as that you may obtain, *1 Cor. 9. 24.* You may run, you may labour, and yet not obtain the Crown of Life, except ye ſo run, as to come to the end of your Chriſtian Courſe. You may work, and yet miſs of Salvation, except you work it out; you muſt begin well, and hold on well, and end well, if you deſire happineſs. O how lamentable is it for a man to periſh eternally, after he hath done and ſuffered many things, after he hath made many prayers, and heard many Sermons, and it may be come to many Sacraments, after all this to periſh, that's exceeding lamentable! to be caſt away in the Harbours mouth as it were, to dy within ſight of *Canaan*, to go to Hell after the Soul hath been within one ſtep of Heaven, that's ſad indeed. Now the Lord write theſe things in your hearts by the finger of his holy Spirit, and help you to work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling.

Tibi Domini

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